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THE DEATH'S HEAD CUIRASSIERS; or, Brave of all Braves.

A LEGEND OF THE OLD GUARD.

BY CAPT. FREDERICK WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF "NEMO, KING OF THE TRAMPS," "RED RUDIGER," "THE RUSSIAN SPY," "THE RED RAJAH," "THE IRISH CAPTAIN," ETC.



THE CHARGE OF THE DEATH'S HEAD CUIRASSIERS.

The Death's Head Cuirassiers;

OR,

BRAVE OF ALL BRAVES.

A Legend of the Old Guard.

BY CAPT. FREDERICK WHITTAKER,
AUTHOR OF "THE PHANTOM KNIGHTS," "RED
RUDIGER," "NEMO, KING OF TRAMPS,"
"THE IRISH CAPTAIN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A SMART RECRUIT.

THEY were called the "Death's Heads" in the Guard. Most of them were Gascons; and all the world knows Gascons are dark men, like Spaniards, with brown faces, and the darkest of eyes and hair.

Their helmets were black, with a little silver death's head in front; black were the horse-tails that hung down their backs, black alike crest and pompon, while their uniforms were so dark that they seemed black, though in reality they were the darkest of dark green, laced with black braid.

They had their cuirasses and scabbards japanned black, and the rest of the troops dubbed them all sorts of names; meant in jest but taken up by the regiment in earnest, and made a matter of pride. They carried the thing so far that the officers made things miserable for any blonde officer who happened to be assigned to the regiment; and the soldiers snubbed the fair-haired recruits in the same fashion.

And so matters stood in the early part of August, 1805, when a young man with singularly fair complexion joined the regiment from the remount depot, with a number of other recruits, and answered to the name of "Gabriel Lenoir" on the muster-roll.

He was the only fair man that had been assigned to them in the squad, and when the colonel came to inspect the recruits, he started and frowned at this particularly fair young man, and growled out:

"Who the devil art thou, young man?"

Colonel Lenoir was one of the old school of '93, who had risen from the ranks, and he did not believe in politeness to recruits.

The fair young man saluted as stiffly as a veteran might have done, and said:

"Gabriel Lenoir, my colonel, at your service and that of France."

The colonel looked aghast.

Recruits were used to tremble before his frown; but this young man seemed to be perfectly cool, and not only answered boldly, but used the language of a person of cultivation.

Moreover, he looked the colonel straight in the eye, and had the same name as his commanding officer.

Lenoir looked at Lenoir; colonel at recruit, for half a minute; and then the superior growled out:

"You're ill-named. You should be called Leblanc," [white] "not Lenoir. I'd advise you to exchange into another regiment as soon as possible. You'll not be happy here. You're out of uniform."

"On the contrary, my colonel," replied the fair young man coolly, "I intend, if you do not object positively, to remain in this regiment till I have become its colonel."

Gabriel Lenoir Senior looked at his young namesake and turned purple, as he blurted out:

"Impudent recruit! and where do you suppose I shall be, then?"

"Holding the baton of a marshal, my colonel," promptly responded the fair-haired recruit with a smile.

The purple faded out of the colonel's face; for it is not in human nature to resist artful flattery, and he said in a more mollified way:

"Young man, you may make a soldier some day, if you'll learn to keep your tongue quiet. It is not the custom for a recruit to speak to his commanding officer with the freedom of an equal."

Then the colonel passed on.

When the inspection was over and the recruits were assigned to quarters, Gabriel Lenoir found himself sent to the first squadron, and reported to the sergeant in charge.

Sergeant Crocasse was a tall, rawboned Gascon, with a face that seemed made of leather, and a mustache that nearly touched his breast. He had an eye like a hawk, a voice

like a bull, and was familiarly known in the regiment as "Old Guard-house," from the frequency with which the words "two days in the guard-house" were on his lips, in dealing with recruits, who were to him a sort of troublesome beast, to be punished all the time.

He looked at our fair youth for a few moments with a sour expression, and then observed:

"The service is going to the devil. A pretty Death's Head you'll make, with your blue eyes and white head. I wonder the colonel didn't send you back to the depot. What's your name, recruit?"

"Gabriel Lenoir," answered the recruit.

"Old Guard-house" made a grimace.

"Lenoir, indeed! The impudence of having the same name as our colonel. *Morbleu*, young man, who gave you that name?"

"My godfathers and godmothers in baptism," was the composed answer.

"Old Guard-house" grunted.

"The devil! And what do you want in this regiment?"

"To do my duty till I become its colonel," answered the recruit, almost as he had answered his commander.

If the colonel was astonished, the sergeant was fairly flabbergasted.

He gasped and stared at the recruit for a moment and then burst out:

"A colonel! You a colonel! you white-headed sheep of the country! And where shall I be then, pray?"

He ended, trying to restrain his passion to the limits of sarcasm, and succeeded badly, for the froth flew from his lips as he roared out:

"Where will I be when you are a colonel?"

"General commanding the division," was the mild reply, with a smile so innocent that Crocasse was disarmed at once, and grunted more placably:

"Oh, that, indeed! That's different! But hark ye, young man, you talk too much. The Death's Heads do their work silently. How old are you?"

"Twenty-two, sergeant."

"Very good. Here is your number, 1818, and yonder is your bed. You will get ready for guard at once."

And so Gabriel Lenoir found himself, at the mandate of "Old Guard-house," a part of the machine with which the emperor of the French was to overturn, in a few years, half the thrones of Europe.

"And where did you serve, Blancbec?" [white-nose], asked one of Gabriel's new comrades, as they turned into the guard-house an hour after, to wait for their time of going on post in the second relief. The speaker was a dark Gascon, with a scar across one cheek that split his mustache in half, and his voice had an unpleasant ring of contempt in it. "You don't look old enough to have smelt powder."

All of the Guard were large, powerful men, and they looked askance at the young recruit as if they disliked him.

Yet he was handsomer than any man in the room, measuring six feet two in his stockings, with a figure like Apollo, and clear-cut, regular features.

"In the first place, comrade," he answered, "my name is Lenoir, not Blancbec, and if you repeat that name I shall have to slap your face. In the second—"

But before he could say it, the black Gascon strode up to him with a furious scowl, hissing out:

"You'll slap my face! You, boy, child, miserable white-head! Do you know who I am?"

"No, I don't," answered Gabriel, quietly; and the scarred Gascon slapped his cuirass till it rung again, growling:

"I am Hercule Forton, called *Casse Tete*, and I have killed sixteen men in single combat, of whom one was a Mameluke. Now will you slap my face?"

And *Casse Tete* [Head Breaker] held it out in such inviting proximity that the young man laughed and said:

"Not unless you are rude enough to call me Blancbec again. In that case—"

"Blancbec! Blancbec! Blancbec!" hissed *Casse Tete*, furiously; and in a moment the young recruit dealt him a sounding slap with his hard gauntleted hand, and then sprung back and laid his hand on his sword, in expectation of an attack.

But *Casse Tete* only drew himself up as stiff as a post, ground his teeth, and growled out:

"Very well. To-morrow, in the wood behind the park. You shall see."

Gabriel Lenoir, new to the customs of the Imperial Guard, did not know that their dignity forbade them to quarrel in public, and he was saved the necessity of further words by the bugle sounding "Guard turn out," when he was sent on post before the Pavilion of Diana.

The Pavilion of Diana was sacred to the emperor, empress, and the attendants that were with them, and Gabriel's orders were strict to admit no one else; so he took up his walk while the relief clanked away, and was soon lost in the day-dreams of an ambitious young soldier, from which he was aroused, at the end of half an hour by the approach of two persons. Then Gabriel Lenoir muttered:

"It is himself. I wonder will he know me again?"

CHAPTER II.

THE PAVILION OF DIANA.

THE two figures that approached bore a marked contrast to each other. One was tall, slender, handsome, aristocratic in bearing, dressed as a diplomat of the first rank, his velvet coat blazing with gold embroidery; the other was short, stout, in a dark-green uniform faced with velvet, without so much as a gold cord anywhere.

Yet the little stout man's face was the face of the master, and the tall man treated him with an obsequious courtesy that showed he knew it.

The sentry, by the door of the pavilion, raised his saber to his lips in salute, the little man acknowledging it with a scarcely perceptible movement of his small white hand, as if he were used to being saluted all day and found it a bore to answer so many times.

He glanced carelessly at the tall figure of the boy cuirassier, towering over himself a head and shoulders; and Gabriel's countenance fell as the little man entered the pavilion, saying:

"This way, monsieur the prince. We shall be quiet here."

"He does not remember me," said the recruit to himself, and he gave a sigh, as he resumed his tramp up and down. "Yet why should he?" he muttered. "Even he has changed. He has grown stout, and his hair is cut short. The emperor has forgotten consul and general."

He pursued his walk in silence; but he did not feel satisfied for all that. He was only a boy yet, full of ambition and romance, and he had been indulging all sorts of hopes from the time when he should see the man he had not beheld face to face since he saw him on the field of Marengo.

But the emperor had passed him by without noticing him any more than if he had been a statue.

Presently, as the young sentry paced his lonely round, he heard the sound of voices inside the pavilion, one of them raised as if in anger; and he could not help standing still to listen.

It was the voice of the emperor that he heard, and he remembered it well.

"I tell you, monsieur, it *must* be; and if his majesty is not inclined to be with me, he must be against me. I am sick of these perfidious English, and they must be driven from every port in Europe. They and I cannot exist together, prince, do you hear?"

Gabriel listened intently and heard the low tones of the Austrian diplomat:

"Your majesty is too severe on my master. We cannot abandon our ancient allies to oblige even your majesty."

"Very well, prince, very well," responded the other voice sharply, "it is to be as you please. You choose war, and you shall have it. When the tricolor floats under the shadow of St. Stephen's at Vienna, you will remember that I offered you your choice."

Then there was a short silence, and the sentry heard some one pacing up and down the room as if in excitement.

Presently the smooth tones of the Austrian broke in:

"That is your majesty's ultimatum?"

"Absolutely, prince, absolutely."

"Then I have no resource but to ask the Minister of State for my passports, and to bid your majesty farewell," was the quiet answer.

The sentry outside trembled all over with excitement. There was to be war between France and Austria, and he, simple Gabriel Lenoir, private soldier, knew it before the Minister of State.

He could not help a look of pride on his face as the Austrian came out, and the emperor stood in the doorway, lifting his hat coldly in response to the profound salutation of the diplomat.

"Farewell, monsieur," was all he said, and then the first man of France stood in his favorite attitude, his head bent forward, his eyes on the ground, his hands behind his back, while the Austrian walked away.

Meantime the sentry continued his walk as if he had not seen the emperor, and the emperor remained staring at the gravel, till the clash of the sentry's accouterments seemed at last to rouse him from his thoughts, for he looked up in his sharp, abrupt way.

"Come here," said the emperor.

The little man with the smooth, marble face eyed Gabriel keenly, and said:

"I remember you. Where have I seen your face?"

"At Marengo, sire," almost whispered the young cuirassier.

"Yes, yes, at Marengo. What rank did you hold then? You were a boy."

"I was trumpeter in the Ninth Cuirassiers, sire," answered Gabriel.

The emperor nodded.

"Yes, yes; trumpeter, trumpeter. There was a trumpeter, I remember, took General Zack prisoner and brought in a flag. Are you the man?"

In truth the first man in France had almost forgotten Gabriel; but he had the rare tact of feeling his way with soldiers, and appearing to remember more than he really did.

Gabriel's face lighted up with pride and joy, as he stammered:

"Yes, sire. Oh, sire, I thought your majesty had forgotten me."

The emperor smiled his rare gracious smile, for which so many men were ready to go joyfully to death.

"Comrade," he said, "I never forget a French soldier who does his duty. So you are in the Black Cuirassiers? But you are not a Gascon?"

"No, sire, I am from Alsace. My mother was from Strasbourg."

The emperor nodded again and scanned the recruit from head to foot.

"From Alsace? You speak German?"

"Yes, sire."

"And you speak good French. You are not a peasant."

Gabriel Lenoir flushed deeply.

"No, sire. We—my father—was—in the old times—noble."

The emperor looked at him in the same thoughtful, absent way he had shown all through the interview.

"Yes, yes, I see. Tell me. Did not I say something to you at Marengo?"

He knew he must have done so; for he always complimented acts of valor.

Gabriel looked happy and modest as he stammered out:

"Yes, sire. I remember every word as well as if you were saying it now. You said: 'You have begun well, young man. I never forget brave soldiers. Remind me when we meet that I owe you a chance to win an epaulette.'"

As the boy finished he almost gasped for breath. It seemed to him so absurdly audacious that he should be speaking so freely to the emperor.

But the little man in the green and white coat smiled on him still, more kindly than ever, and replied:

"Very good. It is time I kept my word. Can you write well?"

"Yes, sire."

"Write me down your name, number and squadron, and, as soon as you come off guard, tell your sergeant that I wish to see you in my cabinet. Stay. The guard will not pass you, so take this, and say that I ordered you to bring it to me."

As he spoke he took from his pocket a small silver snuffbox, richly chased, and added with his sweet smile:

"It will keep us both in mind of each other. *Au revoir!*"

He waved his hand and walked off toward the outlines of the great palace, just visible above the trees.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAID OF HONOR.

GABRIEL LENOIR hardly knew whether he were awake or asleep as he resumed his lonely tramp. He felt as happy as a bird. The em-

peror had not forgotten him. It seemed too good to be true.

Absorbed in his thoughts he was recalled suddenly to himself by a voice near him saying hoarsely:

"Hoh! sentry, are you blind that you cannot see an officer?"

Gabriel halted stiffly and gazed at a handsome but dissipated young man in the Prussian diplomatic uniform who looked at him superciliously, and observed in a tone of wonder:

"Well, upon my word I thought you gentlemen of the Guard at least knew your business, but by Jove our recruits are better instructed. Why don't you present sabre?"

Gabriel looked at the young man and disliked him intensely.

"Because, my orders are to salute none but field officers," he answered, "and you are only a captain."

The young man sneered openly.

"You are very wise."

Then he advanced as if he was about to enter the pavilion, when Gabriel put himself in front of the door and said sternly:

"That is forbidden, save to the emperor and the ladies of the court."

The young Prussian drew up haughtily.

"Don't you recognize my uniform? I am the Prince of Potsdam, of the blood royal of Prussia, on a visit here. Do you wish me to complain to the emperor of your insolence?"

Gabriel had heard of the prince as on a visit to Paris, and knew that the emperor had shown him distinguished honor; but he was also inflexible in his duty, on account of the strange and violent antipathy he had taken to this Prussian stranger.

Not but the prince was handsome; for he was tall and graceful, with a sharp-cut aristocratic face, blue eyes and fair hair, but there was a certain redness and puffiness about the cheeks that told of drink and dissipation, and a haughty cruel curve to the mouth that aroused the cuirassier's antagonism at once.

So he only pointed his sword at the prince and said sternly:

"Stand back. I have my orders."

The Prussian ground his teeth and turned away with a curse saying:

"I'll pay you for this yet."

Then he stalked off toward the palace, and Gabriel resumed his walk in a frame of mind in which hatred of the Prussians and contempt for this particular Prussian were blended with a sense of triumph that he had sustained the dignity of the French army against this overbearing bully.

But his tour of duty was destined to have some more little adventures before the relief arrived; and he had hardly taken three turns before he saw his enemy coming back.

Presently the prince came up and on one arm was the most beautiful being Gabriel had ever seen, while the other sustained no less a person than the Empress Josephine herself, who was talking and smiling in her own gracious way to this dissipated Prussian, much to the poor sentry's secret disgust.

As they passed, he stood at a salute to the empress, who bowed her head with her own sweet smile, and he heard the prince say with a harsh laugh:

"Your sentries here are stiffer than ours, your majesty. That fellow wanted to kill me just now, for trying to pass him."

Gabriel heard and could say nothing, though he flushed slightly; but if the prince meant to humiliate him, he failed to do so, for just at that moment the lovely girl on his arm raised her eyes, looked Gabriel in the face and said:

"Probably he was right, prince, for they only put veterans on guard here."

And Gabriel flushed scarlet then, for the girl's eyes seemed to look right into his soul and such a face he had never seen before, dark, oval, statuesque, warm with color, with intense black eyes and hair like night.

He heard the prince say as they went into the pavilion:

"Veterans! Why, that's only a boy."

And the lady's soft voice answered:

"Our French boys count their years by battles, prince, and every one of them is a victory."

After that the young sentry could afford to pass up and down outside, smiling to himself and wondering:

"Who is that lovely creature? Ah but she is a good Frenchwoman, and hates a Prussian as much as I do. Who knows, who knows?"

It was a time of high hopes and romance; and Gabriel was one of those soldiers who were always thinking of the *baton de maréchal* that lay, according to the proverb, at the bottom of every French soldier's knapsack.

The dark eyes of the unknown beauty had rested on him and gone straight down into his soul. What mattered it to him that she was a companion to the empress?

"The emperor himself was only a lieutenant of artillery at my age," he said to himself "and Marshal Murat was a stable-boy. A colonel is not enough, I must be a general and a count at the least, and that shall be my countess. I swear it."

Meantime, within the pavilion, he could see the empress reclining back in an easy-chair, and listening to the words of the prince, who was talking earnestly to her, while the dark-eyed young lady stood behind the chair of her mistress in an attitude of respect, with her face turned away so that the young cuirassier could not see it.

The door was wide open, and he kept pacing slowly up and down, so as to be near it, but could not hear all that was said.

Only the Prussian seemed to be urging something on the empress which she was unwilling to grant, for he heard her say:

"It will be useless, prince. You do not know his majesty."

Then the prince said something in a low tone, at which she turned to the dark-eyed young lady and observed:

"Inez, *ma belle*, will you go to the palace and bring me from my chamber the small vinaigrette on the table?"

The young lady courtesied, kissed the hand of the empress, and backed out of the presence. As she came out she cast another look at the handsome sentry, in the same wide-eyed innocent way she had done before, and answered his salute with a slight smile and bow, then turned away to the palace, just as the Prussian prince shut the door, observing:

"There's no need for the sentry to hear all that passes, madame."

Gabriel felt irritated at the action, but continued his walk for some minutes till he heard the Prussian's voice say, in its usual coarse loud tone:

"Very well, madame; then I can count on your influence with Inez."

As he spoke he opened the door, and Gabriel saw the empress come out, and heard her answer:

"You shall have it, prince, but I fear it is no use."

Then they moved away, and Gabriel was left wondering what it was that the Prussian was asking, and what was all the mystery about it. He could not unravel it by pacing up and down; but he watched the prince and the empress saunter away down a shady alley of the park, when the beautiful young lady came in from the palace and stopped as if in disappointment at the door, seeing the pavilion empty.

Gabriel felt his heart thump against his ribs as the lady looked at him.

She was going to speak to him; and, for the first time, she too showed symptoms of a slight agitation. Instead of looking at him, as before, as if he were a handsome piece of furniture, she seemed all of a sudden to realize that he was a young man, and that she was alone with him, for she blushed as she said:

"I beg your pardon, but where is the empress—has she gone?"

"Her majesty passed down the path to the fountain of Hercules, mademoiselle," replied our hero, growing crimson in his turn, as he noted the color of his companion, and then he drew up and saluted, as she bent her head and passed by him with a low "Thanks, monsieur," and vanished.

Gabriel Lenoir stood staring after her. She had called him "monsieur," but that was only her politeness and ignorance of military etiquette.

And she had cast down her eyes as she passed, while her cheek was crimson.

So was his own for that matter. It was hard to tell which was the more bashful of the two. But at least he dared to look after her, and, as he did so, he noticed that a flower fell from the bosom of her dress, while she hurried on without noticing it.

Then the young cuirassier's face lighted up joyfully, and he stalked away after her to where the flower lay, though it was outside of his regular beat; snatched it eagerly; and then rushed back and was stiff and solemn as ever.

He did not see, as he turned his back, that some one watched him pick up that flower, none other than Mademoiselle Inez herself, who had just rounded a big evergreen, and peeped back through the branches.

As she saw it, a smile dimpled her red lips, and she tossed her pretty little head and murmured:

"How absurd! But he's very good looking. What a pity he is only a private soldier."

She went on again, for she saw the empress coming with the Prince of Potsdam, and she hastened up to her mistress to be rewarded with a smile and:

"Thanks, mademoiselle, we were talking of you. Do you know that the Prince of Potsdam has just been asking my influence with his majesty, to secure your hand in marriage?"

The pretty maid of honor turned as white as a sheet, glanced up at the empress in a frightened sort of way and answered impulsively:

"Oh, your majesty, for Heaven's sake do not—do not!"

She could say no more. Her voice appeared to fail her, and at that very moment:

"Clank! Clank! Clank!"

The relief passed by them, changing the guard of grim cuirassiers, and at the head, after the corporal, marched the young fair-haired recruit.

To Inez the interruption was welcome, for they came so near that conversation was suspended by the noise of their accouterments.

As they passed, her eyes met those of the young cuirassier once more, and both of them flushed crimson again. The Prince of Potsdam noticed the fact and stared sternly at Gabriel, who returned his stare with the stern visage of a soldier on duty.

"There is my enemy," thought Gabriel, "we shall meet again."

CHAPTER IV.

A PAIR OF EPAULETTES.

We may be sure that the young recruit had not forgotten to save the flower he had picked up after the beautiful maid of honor had dropped it. It lay inside his cuirass over his heart as he marched by and he had it with him when he reported to his sergeant what the emperor had told him—that he was to report in the cabinet as soon as he came off.

The sergeant stared at the snuff-box which Gabriel showed him to confirm the tale told. The crown and the letter N on the box were all-potent. He was excused at once and went to the palace. Here he was halted at the foot of a grand stone staircase by a grim old grenadier with a gray moustache:

"Not so fast, my little cabbage. This is not a beer saloon. What do you want here? Go back!"

"I want to see his majesty," replied the young man boldly. "He told me to come to him in his private cabinet."

The grenadier gave a scornful sniff, and threw his bayonet forward, aiming at Gabriel's throat.

"Not so fast, my chicken. That sort of tale won't pass here. You have been in the canteen, and the wine has gone to your head."

Gabriel drew the snuff-box from his pocket, and said to the sentry:

"There! Do you know that? The emperor told me to bring that to him."

Then the grenadier looked puzzled, threw up his bayonet, brought his gun to an order, and said doubtfully:

"Well, that's different. I'll call the corporal! I can't let you pass."

The corporal, with a long white mustache, looked at the snuff-box, scratched his head, and finally said:

"Well, I suppose you can pass to the anteroom. One of the pages will take you in."

So Gabriel ascended the great marble staircase, clanking and rattling at every step, and went down a broad corridor to where he saw a crowd at the end.

As he came closer, he perceived that this crowd was made up of marshals, generals, diplomats and high officers of the palace, all blazing with gold, in the midst of which he, in his simple dark uniform of a private soldier, felt as if every one must be staring and sneering at him.

Nevertheless, he stalked forward into the middle of the crowd, and, as he had expected, became at once the target for every eye, while a slight smile sat on every face.

The situation was embarrassing, and Gabriel grew pink, crimson and purple in rapid succession, till a little boy in blue and gold came superciliously up to him and piped:

"I say, my friend, you've made a little mistake, I think. This is not the barracks by any means."

Then the smile became a titter as the great people looked on, expecting to see the boy quiz the recruit, for waiting in an anteroom is dull, and a joke to pass the time is very welcome.

Gabriel, feeling very much like a dog in a crowd of strange dogs, answered in an apologetic way:

"I beg pardon, little gentleman; but is not this the anteroom to his majesty's cabinet?"

The page tossed his head.

"Of course it is. What do you want in here? Come, right about face, march!"

But Gabriel grew calmer the moment he found active opposition, and said:

"Excuse me, little gentleman; but I was told by his majesty to come here and bring this back to him. You see I was on guard by the Pavilion of Diana—"

As soon as he had said the words "Pavilion of Diana," there was a stir in the crowd of officials; and as Gabriel held out the silver snuff-box, the crowd made a movement toward the cuirassier, just as rudely and curiously as if they had all been peasants.

As for the page, he looked as if some one had boxed his ears, and answered, civilly:

"Oh! is that it? Give me the box and I'll take it in to his majesty."

"No, if you please, little gentleman," said the young cuirassier, firmly. "My orders are to deliver it personally."

Then some one in the crowd laughed, and Gabriel heard a rough voice say:

"Purbleu, marshal, I told you no one could fool one of my babes. He will go in, too."

Gabriel knew the voice of his grim colonel, and looking round, saw that stalwart warrior talking to no less a person than Marshal Ney himself.

The young man knew the marshal by sight, as well as Murat. What soldier of the Grand Army did not?

The marshal nodded kindly to him in answer to his salute, and said to the page, in his brusque way:

"Well, well, why don't you go in and report? If his majesty wants to see a soldier, depend upon it he has reasons. Go in quickly."

The boy, looking scared, vanished by a low doorway in the side of the room, and presently came sliding back through the crowd, saying to Gabriel:

"Follow me, cuirassier."

Then, indeed, there was a buzz of intense amazement as the simple soldier, in his black uniform, with his funereal plumes and clanking cuirass, stalked by princes, dukes, counts, marshals and barons, kicking their heels in the anteroom, and entered before them all into the sacred precincts of the emperor's private and special cabinet.

"Who is he?"

"What is he?"

"What a fine-looking fellow?"

"He was on guard at the pavilion."

"He must have heard what was said."

Such were a few of the whispers that Gabriel caught as he passed on, to all outward seeming stiff and impassive, but quaking inwardly at the idea of again facing the emperor.

He had to stoop his crest to enter under the curtains that shaded the door; and then he stood bolt upright in a small room, where sat the emperor at a desk, writing signatures on a heap of papers and tossing them on the floor.

Behind the emperor's chair stood a tall, handsome gentleman, in the most gorgeous uniform Gabriel had yet seen, and which he recognized as that of an aide-de-camp of the emperor.

This gentleman looked at him as he came in, and nodded his head as if he were well pleased; but no one said a word until the emperor had finished the pile of signatures, when he looked up and cried out:

"Aha! My boy trumpeter. You are prompt. This is your man, Duroc. He is an Alsatian, and I know him to have the courage of ten devils. Let's see, your name is—"

"Gabriel Lenoir, sire, No. 1313, first squadron, Death's Head Cuirassiers."

The emperor turned to Duroc.

"He'll do, will he not?"

The aide hesitated.

"If your majesty pleases, it would not be respectful to the King of Prussia, unless—"

"Exactly," said the emperor, interrupting.

"Here, fill out the commission. What rank should he be?"

Again Duroc hesitated.

"For a first-class mission, sire, the *attache* should not be less than a captain; but the precedent in the regiment would be—"

The emperor nodded.

"I know it. But it is doubtful if he ever gets back alive. Make it out Captain in the Death's Heads, Duroc, supernumerary."

The aide compressed his lips slightly, but made no further remark, and filled out a parchment, which the emperor signed in his usual rapid scrawl, and then said sharply:

"That'll do, Duroc. Remember that on your discretion hangs the destiny of all France. Don't spare your *attache*, and above all things remember, Prussia must be kept out of the league till I have settled the others. Good-by."

Gabriel stood amazedly looking on; for the emperor had not addressed to him a single word after his first greeting, and now, General Duroc came forward, put the roll of parchment in his hand, and said politely:

"Come, *captain*, it is time we were off. You have to change your uniform and we both must be at Berlin inside of three days. Come!"

Then, Gabriel, feeling dazed and not daring to believe his sudden stroke of good fortune, passed out into the ante-room, following Duroc, and heard the general say to Ney:

"It is settled, marshal. My *attache*, Captain Lenoir, of the Death's Heads. We are off to-night."

Then they passed out to the front of the palace, where there was standing a coach with four horses, and Duroc motioned our bewildered hero into it, sprung after, and said, as the door slammed:

"To the Tuileries at once, as hard as you can go. Office of the Controller of the Finances, Monsieur Vermouche!"

Then, away dashed the carriage, and Duroc turned and narrowly inspected his companion for the first time. The result seemed to please him; for he said at last:

"You look intelligent, and you're as strong as a horse. You say you talk good German. Well enough to pass for a Prussian, if necessary?"

"Yes, general, if *necessary*," replied the young man, with emphasis on the last word; "but I admit that I hate them too badly to like such a job, even in fun."

Duroc laughed.

"So much the better. You hate them?"

"I have cause to, general. They killed my father like cowards, after he had given up his sword, and my mother died of grief on his account. I remember them well before Valmy, though I was only a child of seven then. I remember how they ravaged France, under their accursed Duke of Brunswick. I hope the time will come when I shall be even with them."

Duroc listened and smiled, well pleased at the unexpected energy of the young man's language.

"So you hate the Prussians?" said Duroc, rubbing his hands. "Very well then, captain, you'll be pleased to know that we are on our way to Berlin, to prepare for Prussia such a beating as she has never had."

"Good, general, good," cried Lenoir, joyfully. "And what am I to do? Give me my instructions, and I'll carry them out to the letter."

"Very well," said Duroc. "You shall have them in a few words. I am going to Berlin as a special envoy from his majesty, to offer the King of Prussia the English province of Hanover, on the simple condition of his neutrality in the war with Austria. You know we're going to war with Austria of course. If you had not been on guard there when the emperor broke out you might not be here. He takes strange fancies, and you have the luck of being Alsatian. Very well. As I said, I go to Berlin as the envoy; you as military *attache*. You can draw?"

"Yes, general, I was at school in the town of Strasbourg, when Marengo came on, and I went as a substitute. Since that I have learned fortification in my leisure times."

"Very good. You are the man we want. I shall be at Berlin; but you will have to do a good deal of traveling about in the country, as a simple German citizen, and it is your busi-

ness to get, or to make, plans of all the fortresses on the French frontier; to find the numbers and stations of all the troops, and to get up reports of every thing for the cabinet, to be used when we are ready."

Then he began to give the young man special instructions on all sorts of points, to which Gabriel listened attentively; and by the time they reached Paris, which was not till late in the evening, he was able to say:

"I think I understand all, general, and can do it. And now what am I to do for uniform and expenses, monsieur? I am, as you must know, only a private man with no fortune."

"You'll come with me," said Duroc, "and you shall be provided. Money is nothing, when work is to be done."

And so Gabriel thought, as he was hurried by his chief from place to place, to find himself, in the course of a few hours, provided with capacious trunks of clothing of all sorts, gorgeous uniforms of half a dozen different kinds, diplomatic and military, with a purse of gold in his pocket, and a pocketbook of bills in his breast, when Duroc told him:

"Now, captain, it is time we were off. The horses are ready, and we must travel all night. His majesty believes in hurrying every one."

CHAPTER V.

NEARING THE BATTLE.

Two months after Captain Lenoir, of the Death's Head Cuirassiers, left Paris to go to Berlin as military *attache* to the French embassy, a traveling carriage was slowly toiling along up one of the passes of the Tyrol, and halted at the top to breathe the horses, looking down on the Bavarian plains that surrounded the fair city of Munich.

At the very moment of stopping the postillion turned his head sharply to the north west as if something had attracted his attention.

A moment later the hood of the carriage was thrown back from within, and a tall, fair young man in a furred pelisse stood up and looked out in the same direction, saying:

"What's the matter, Hans?"

The postillion touched his hat.

"There is fighting going on, Herr Graf, in the Black Forest. Hark! There it is again."

As he spoke they heard the distant hollow boom, never to be mistaken, of cannon, two or three following each other in rapid succession.

In those days civilians were as quick as soldiers to recognize the sounds of cannon, for they heard them nearly as often. The firing came from the direction of the Black Forest, at least fifty miles off, but plainly audible to them at their high elevation.

The young man in the carriage stood and listened as intently as the postillion. After an interval of a minute or so a fresh report boomed out, then several together, after which all was still.

The young man took up from the seat of the carriage a telescope, with which he scanned the plain below him for several minutes.

At last he said, as if satisfied:

"There's nothing to prevent us going on, Hans. As soon as the horses are dry, start them up."

The postillion touched his hat again, and the carriage moved on, the way now being downward toward the plain.

They had not gone very far before they came on another traveling carriage, halted by the roadside; and the cause of its stoppage was made manifest by the fact of one of the hind wheels having come off.

The owner, the postillion and a peasant were trying to raise the carriage as they came up, to replace the wheel; and the first named of these, a gentleman in a sort of half-military uniform, hailed the other vehicle, crying:

"Hola! Come and help us. Don't you see we've lost a linch-pin?"

The tone of this gentleman was not only authoritative, but rude; and he called out as if he had a right to say what he pleased to any one.

The fair young man in the first carriage looked quietly at the wreck, and perceiving that the postillion and peasant had already got the axle up on a rest and were fixing the wheel, he answered coolly:

"I think you can get along without us, and I am in a hurry to reach Munich."

As he spoke his eyes met those of the gentleman in the road, and the latter uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Who are you? I've seen your face before."

The fair young man smiled slightly.

"No doubt, prince. I have seen yours too. You are Prince Ferdinand of Potsdam and the last man I ever expected to see here when fighting is going on."

The prince looked at him in a doubtful sort of way, as if undecided whether to show anger or not—but he replied:

"You know me. Now, then, who are you, my friend?"

The fair young man smiled again.

"Not your friend, prince, on any account. I am Graf Gabriel von Schwartz, of the Hanoverian army, traveling for my health."

The prince eyed him suspiciously.

"Hanoverian? I never saw you in any town of Hanover. I have seen you in Paris. You're a Frenchman."

The Hanoverian count, as he had announced himself, shrugged his shoulders and got out of the carriage. He came up to the Prussian prince and said to him with the utmost politeness:

"Permit me, prince, to remind you that I am the Graf von Schwartz, and that any man who doubts my word will have to answer for it on the spot."

As he said this, he looked straight into the eyes of the prince, and the latter quailed ever so little, though he retorted:

"Then if you are what you say you are, you are the living image of a man I met at Paris two months ago."

The Graf von Schwartz answered:

"I am a Hanoverian, sir. Do you believe it or not?"

And the prince answered, hastily:

"Of course; if you say so, I must believe it. Where have you come from, count?"

"From Innsbruck," replied Schwartz. "I am going to Munich, and thence to the town of Ulm. Understand me, prince, I am in a hurry, and you cannot be allowed to follow me too closely. You will need a new linch-pin in your carriage. I will send one back from the next post-house. You will find it best to wait here for it."

"I shall do no such thing," retorted the prince, hastily. "What do you think I am made of? I shall go on with what sort of a wooden pin I can make here."

"You will not go forward till I have sent you back a linch-pin," said Count Gabriel, sternly. "Do you understand, sir? You and I do not travel together any further than a piece of level ground."

The prince started back and flushed deeply as he answered:

"Sir, do you wish to pick a quarrel?"

"You have described my intention with entire accuracy," answered Gabriel, with a profound bow. "Either you do as I order, or we must cross swords here and now, at once."

"Then we'll do it," cried the prince, in an angry tone. "I'm not to be hectorated by any stranger that comes along. I've swords in my carriage."

"So have I," responded the other, smiling, and in a moment both ran to their respective vehicles and came back, each with a pair of swords in his hand, while the postillions looked on with amazement, wondering what was to happen.

The Prince of Potsdam looked a little bit nervous, but he placed himself opposite the tall Hanoverian, and held out the swords, saying:

"Choose, sir."

The Hanoverian took one and threw down his own blades.

"This will do," he said; "though mine are the best, I think."

Then each gentleman retreated to his own carriage, threw off his upper garments, and went to meet his adversary.

The swords clashed, there was a short struggle, and then the Prince of Potsdam uttered a cry of pain and dropped his sword. The Hanoverian had run him through the right shoulder and disabled him for the time.

Count Gabriel calmly wiped the sword, picked up the scabbard, and sheathed it, when he remarked to Potsdam:

"Now, sir, your highness perceives the necessity of remaining here till I send you a linch-pin and a surgeon."

The prince gave a grin of pain as he answered, spitefully:

"You have the best of it this time; but I'll be even with you yet."

Count Gabriel laughed, jumped into his carriage and said:

"Drive on, Hans, as hard as you can. We've no more time to lose."

Then the carriage rattled away and the poor Prince of Potsdam was left by the roadside to nurse his wound and grind his teeth.

"He's a Frenchman," he said to himself. "I know it. I've seen his face before, and it was at Versailles. He's a spy of the French emperor, and if I can only follow quick enough, I'll have him taken and hanged."

Meantime the pretended Hanoverian, who was none other than Gabriel Lenoir, had changed horses at the post-house and galloped on toward Munich, feeling the postillions heavily on the way, and entirely neglecting to send back either surgeon or linchpin to the Prince of Potsdam.

The fact was that Gabriel was now in a very dangerous position. In Prussia, where no one knew him, he had been able to travel about as a German, and had performed all the service directed him by Duroc; but in Prussia he had been on neutral ground. Now he was in Austrian territory and the sound of guns showed that hostilities were going on near him, while he had just been recognized as a Frenchman by the last person he had expected to meet in such a place.

As he galloped along from post to post, he felt more and more anxious, till he crossed the Bavarian frontier and approached the city of Munich.

Then he breathed freer, and when he at last entered Munich he said to himself in a tone of satisfaction:

"Now there is nothing to prevent my putting on my uniform again."

As he said so, he looked out of the window, and felt a strange sinking at his heart. He was on Bavarian territory, it was true; but there, by the post-house, he saw a little picket of dismounted hussars, and the uniform was that of Austria.

An officer came up to the carriage door and looked in.

"Your passport, sir, if you please. Where are you going?"

Gabriel felt in his pockets for the paper and began to talk to gain time.

"What are you doing on Bavarian territory, monsieur? I thought—"

The Austrian laughed.

"Thought the Bavarians were able to take care of themselves. It seems not. General Mack has occupied the whole territory, and the Bavarians have gone to join the French. Oh, we shall give them a fine beating soon, when the Russians come up."

This was news to Gabriel, who asked, as he presented his passport:

"And General Mack, where is he?"

"At Ulm," said the Austrian as he scanned the passport. "This is all right Herr Graf. Happy to meet you. Ah, you Prussians are fools not to join us and help us to beat these Frenchmen."

"Perhaps we shall sooner than you think, captain," answered Gabriel, smiling. "I hope I shall find the general at Ulm. The fact is between ourselves, I have a secret mission to him. You understand."

The Austrian captain winked wisely in answer to Gabriel's look of mystery, and then the carriage drove away in the direction of Ulm.

As they cleared the city they heard the distant cannonading renewed, but this time in a different direction, straight ahead, and at or beyond the city of Ulm.

And, as they passed along the roads, they began to come on little columns of army wagons toiling along toward Ulm, with an occasional squad of white-coated infantry.

The soldiers stared at the carriage as if they wondered what it was doing there, and Gabriel Lenoir took out of the carriage pocket a pair of pistols, looked carefully to the priming, and put them back. He began to see that he might need them before long.

He was going straight toward Prussian territory which had been neutral; but, from the direction of the firing, it was evident that French troops must be on that territory; and if so, Prussia had cause to complain of France.

"I wish I could see the tricolor," said Gabriel to himself.

While he was thinking of it, he heard the boom of more guns, this time away to the right of Ulm, and it became evident to him that the Austrians were, if they only knew it, in a perilous position, with the enemy on three

sides of them and only the road to Munich left open.

While he was thinking of this, the carriage stopped again, and the postillion touched his hat and said:

"Please, Herr Graf, the road is blocked ahead of us, and I think there is going to be a battle."

The honest German looked puzzled and frightened, and Gabriel got up on the box with his telescope to see what was the matter.

For more than a mile ahead the road was full of wagons; little squads of soldiers were hurrying to the front, and they could see a cloud of dust beyond.

Presently they heard the popping of musket-shots, and then came a broad flash and a heavy report. It was the sound of a cannon close by.

CHAPTER VI.

TAKING A TRAIN.

THE position of the traveling carriage was now one of decided peril. Fighting was evidently going on, near by, and it was clear that the dispute related to the train of wagons.

If so, it was equally plain that French and Austrians were alike near by, and that the occupant of the traveling carriage ran danger from both parties. If the Austrians were victorious, they might, in a fit of suspicion, search the carriage; and, if so, Gabriel knew that, in the trunk under his seat, lay a French uniform, which would undoubtedly prove his death-warrant in the character of spy.

Should the French take the train, the danger would be almost equally great, from the excitement of the men who would take him for a German, and very likely cut him down without listening to a word.

Under these circumstances it showed remarkable coolness in the young Alsatian that he retained his seat on the box, and quietly watched the smoke and dust, less than a mile off, that told that the battle was growing hot.

The rattle of musket-shots became quick and sharp, the flashes of artillery were frequent, and after a little he could see from the positions of the guns where the contending parties were posted.

The Austrians seemed to be clustered at the head of the train with a battery of four or six guns, while the French had guns on three sides of them, with a cross-fire on them.

Presently the hum of a round shot over the carriage warned the young man that he would soon be under the fire of his friends, and he said to the postillion:

"Drive on, Hans, right into the train."

The postillion, frightened to death, faltered:

"There, Herr Graf! We shall be killed. Let us return to Munich."

But Gabriel had taken his resolution.

It does not take a soldier long to see which way a fight is going, and he perceived that the Austrians were in a fair way to be annihilated in a short time, if they did not lose the train and flee to Munich.

He drew a small pistol from his pocket and pointed it at Hans.

"Drive on. I am a French officer," was all he said.

Hans uttered a groan of fear; but did as he was told and galloped his horses to the rear of the train which Gabriel found already deserted by the cowardly drivers, who had left their teams and were streaming away across country in the true fashion of a defeated army.

"Now," he said sternly to Hans, "I warn you not to try to escape me. Stand by your horses, and I shall shoot at the first step you take to run."

"Indeed, Herr Graf, I won't run," said Hans, his teeth chattering, as another shot passed over the carriage.

Gabriel's keen eyes had caught sight of something in the train, and a bright idea had occurred to him.

Tied up in the rear of the wagons were several led horses, probably officer's chargers, showing that the train belonged to some cavalry regiment; and it occurred to him that he might take one of these, make a dash, and in the confusion of the battle cut his way through to his friends.

No sooner had he thought of this than he jumped down into the carriage, tore open his trunk, and hastily attired himself in his uniform. As each article went on he felt more and more like a soldier, and when he finally clapped the helmet on his head and buckled on

his sword he could not help a sigh of satisfaction.

"At least they cannot hang me for a spy now," he said aloud.

Then he stalked past Hans who stood staring at him as if he had seen a ghost, and went up to one of the chargers in the train, a grand black horse, who whinnied with delight at his approach.

"Aha! old fellow, so you know a soldier when he comes to you?" said Gabriel in German. "Now let's see if you'll serve my emperor as well as you have your own. Where shall I find a saddle for you?"

It struck him that there might be such in some of the wagons, and sure enough he very soon hauled out a grand parade saddle with gold-embroidered cloth, the Austrian eagle in the corner and all the accouterments of a cuirassier officer of rank.

"Clearly," quoth the Alsatian, "I am in luck. I have struck a colonel's rig. But where is the regiment?"

He had no time to lose in speculation, so he saddled up in a hurry, lengthened the stirrups two holes and sprung into the saddle, just as a loud cheer rose above the din of the firing in front.

With a touch of the spur he sent the black charger out from the train, up a bank by the roadside, and saw for the first time what was going on in front.

The Austrian foot soldiers had gathered into a dense mass at the head of the train, and a regiment of cuirassiers in white coats was retreating behind them in some disorder, while through the dust beyond he could see the glitter of steel and the flashes of fire-arms.

As he looked, the white cuirassiers got into line and began to advance again, while the firing in front grew more rapid and Gabriel saw that the moment for action had come.

He was alone, it was true; but he well knew what an easy thing it is to start a panic.

He drew his long sword and galloped silently forward beside the train, in rear of the white cuirassiers.

Presently these last began to trot, and he knew that they were about to charge.

Then he dug his spurs into the black charger's sides and swept on, full speed, shouting as he went:

"Forward, my children! Cut them to pieces! Death to the Austrians!"

He had a loud, clear voice, and they heard him, and looked back through the dust.

Then came a pattering hail of bullets; there was a confusion of dust; a clatter of hoofs; a deep-toned shout in front; and Gabriel found himself in the midst of the white cuirassiers, stabbing and cutting on all sides, the Austrians backing out of the way of his herculean strength, while the distant shout came nearer and nearer.

Then there was a confused rally; he became sensible that dark faces, black helmets and cuirasses and black horses were near him; and the next minute the white cuirassiers were overborne and swept away like chaff before a long black line of trotting horsemen that came on, solid as a wall of steel, and in which Gabriel recognized to his joy and amazement, his own regiment, the Death's Heads, grinding their enemies to powder.

He saw the white cuirassiers go down in all directions, stabbed in the back, and he did his own share in the slaughter till he found himself close to his own colonel, and heard Lenoir roaring:

"Sound the halt! Halt!"

Then the trotting wall of iron, black and terrible, slackened its pace to a halt, and the Death's Head Cuirassiers found themselves in full possession of the train and in rear of the little body of infantry, which had formed square and stood as if undecided whether to surrender or break up in flight.

The grim colonel hardly appeared to notice Gabriel. He greeted him with a short nod, but turned his attention to wheeling his squadrons to charge the infantry; and then again the black wall of iron moved forward at the same rapid, steady trot, armor ringing, horses snorting and tramping, the Death's Head Cuirassiers sitting up in their deep saddles like towers, as they swept down on the demoralized infantry, who opened a scattering fire.

Almost unaware of what he did, Gabriel Lenoir found himself riding in advance of the right wing, ahead of his old squadron, and saw the dark, fierce face of Casse Tete only a few files off.

The gaunt Gascon was looking at him in a singular way, as if he had forgotten where he was; and then Gabriel in a flash remembered how he had quarreled with this very man, and had promised to fight him in the park of Versailles.

From that moment he had forgotten all about it, and he saw that Casse Tete was thinking of this.

But it was no time to dream of duels with one's comrades when the enemy was so close, and the next moment he was recalled to himself by a heavy blow on the breast, which very nearly knocked him off his horse. He knew it to be the glance of a bullet on his cuirass, and turned grimly on the enemy.

There was a blaze of fire and smoke, a confusion of shouts and cries, and then Gabriel found himself cutting and stabbing at the Austrian infantrymen like a demon, surrounded by the Death's Heads, while Casse Tete had pressed out of the ranks beside him, and was giving blow for blow, as if in rivalry.

The square was broken, and the terrible Death's Head Cuirassiers rode over the field, trampling, cutting and stabbing, till the last remnant of resistance was gone, and the horsemen were scattered over the field in the confusion of victory.

Then Gabriel became aware that he was nearing another body of cuirassiers, at the head of whom rode a man on a black horse, in the most gorgeous costume imaginable, and surrounded by a brilliant staff of officers.

This man was tall, with curly black hair and huge whiskers; a very handsome, dark-eyed face, and one of the finest figures the young man had ever seen on horseback.

There was no mistaking who it was. The three-cornered hat, loaded with plumes; the white heron feather in the midst of the black ostriches; the scarlet velvet pelisse; the white breeches and crimson boots; the air of triumphant dandyism that reigned over his whole gallant figure.

Gabriel threw up his saber to salute "Le Beau Sabreur," Murat, the chief of the emperor's cavalry, and felt a thrill of pride that he saw him at last on the battle field.

The marshal was riding leisurely on, and, as Gabriel saluted, he scanned the young cuirassier's figure approvingly.

"Your regiment has done well, captain," he said; "but have you lost your own horse that you ride an Austrian?"

Then Gabriel remembered that he had to account for his presence on the field, so he answered:

"No, Monsieur le Marechal. The fact is, I have no business here; but I could not help it when I saw my old regiment coming."

The marshal looked at him haughtily.

"No business here. Then who are you, sir?"

"I am Captain Lenoir, military *attache* to the legation at Berlin," answered Gabriel.

Marshal Murat frowned heavily.

"You are, are you? Then, captain, you will report at once to head-quarters under arrest. His majesty has enough officers to do duty, without your pushing your nose in where it does not concern you. Report to the Provost Marshal at Nordlingen, by my orders. Not a word, sir. Do as I tell you."

And the brilliant marshal swept across the field, leaving Gabriel petrified with astonishment. He had expected praise, and he had received a regular snubbing.

CHAPTER VII.

MADEMOISELLE AGAIN.

THE train was captured, and Gabriel found that he had come, unawares, into the midst of the Cavalry Corps of the Grand Army under Marshal Murat himself, who had been busily engaged for two days in cutting up the Austrian trains, capturing their reserve artillery, and intercepting them on the south, while Ney, Bernadotte, Soult and the other marshals were sweeping round on the other side, completing the circle which was to end in Mack's surrender.

But for himself, he hardly knew what to do. Marshal Murat had told him to report in arrest to the Provost Marshal at Nordlingen, and he did not know if he would be justified in obeying the order.

General Duroc had sent him on a circuit into the Tyrol, to return by the way of Munich and Ulm, and he knew that it was important he should get back as soon as possible.

While he was puzzling his brain as to what to do in the emergency, he saw a single cuirassier—one of his own regiment—riding slowly toward them at a walk, and recognized the grim, dark face of Hercule Forton, nicknamed Casse Tete.

The cuirassier's sword was dripping with blood as he came up, but Casse Tete saluted him as respectfully as possible, and observed in an apologetic tone:

"I was looking for you, my captain."

"Indeed," said Gabriel, coldly, "and why?"

He remembered his quarrel with the man, and fancied he had come to renew it in some form, trusting to the license of an active campaign to excuse it.

"Yes," answered Casse Tete, his dark face flushing as he spoke. "I want to ask a favor of you, my captain."

"And what is it?" asked Gabriel.

"That you will take me for your orderly, my captain. Every officer has a right to an orderly out of the regiment."

"And why do you want to be my orderly?"

Casse Tete hesitated.

"Well, my captain, you see I am a plain man, who only knows how to handle his weapons; and I stuck close to you to-day in the melee. I thought I was a good one, but I could not keep up with you at the last, and so I concluded you were a better man than I am."

Gabriel smiled.

"You change your note. A few months ago you insulted me."

"I know it, captain; but you were not an officer then. I know my duty now, and I am glad we did not fight in the park, for you would have got the best of me. Therefore, my captain, grant me the favor I ask."

Casse Tete was obviously sincere, and as Gabriel looked at his gaunt, bony figure he thought to himself that such a man at his elbow would not fail to be useful.

"I should like to have you for my orderly, Casse Tete," he said, "but I must tell you that in my present position I cannot have any orderly, unless he speaks German as well as I do. Besides, I am ordered to report to the Provost Marshal under arrest for engaging in this battle without orders."

Casse Tete grinned.

"That's nothing, your honor. Officers under arrest are different from us common men. They have a right to travel like gentlemen. Your honor must not be slack to take the privileges of your class. We soldiers are always proud of a man who was one of us before he put on his epaulettes. All your honor has to do is to ask the captain adjutant to detail me. That is he, riding over the field out yonder with a book in his hand. He's taking the reports of the losses in the squadron."

"Very well, Casse Tete," replied our hero, "I'll take you as my orderly and give you my orders. Go to the rear of that train and find my carriage. The driver's name is Hans. Bring it up here and we'll go on at once to Nordlingen."

Casse Tete saluted and rode off, while Gabriel went up the busy adjutant who greeted him with a cold stare of surprise and a stiff salute.

Gabriel announced his name and rank.

"Indeed?" said the adjutant, coldly. "I have never had the honor of seeing monsieur before, since his sudden promotion. In what can I serve monsieur?"

"By detailing Hercules Forton of the first squadron, as my orderly."

The adjutant looked vexed.

"Certainly, if monsieur insists. It is his right as an officer. At the same time Hercules Forton is a good soldier, too good to be taken from the regiment."

"The man asked me for the detail," said Gabriel quietly, "and I consented to take him. I shall be obliged for the detail."

He saw that the adjutant disliked him and judged it to be on account of the prejudice in the regiment against his complexion.

The adjutant shrugged his shoulders.

"Certainly. As I said before, monsieur has a right to the detail. I presume you will exchange into another regiment, captain, at the earliest moment."

"On the contrary," answered Gabriel, with his old smile of mockery, "I intend to stay in the regiment till I am its colonel."

The adjutant compressed his lips and wrote out the detail. He had heard of Gabriel before and his boldly expressed design, but being

on duty he could not quarrel with a brother officer.

Gabriel bowed as he took the paper, and rode away toward the train, from which he soon saw his carriage coming out, with Casse Tete riding before it.

He saw it pass by Marshal Murat, who was halted with his staff, surveying the field and saw the marshal beckon to Casse Tete who exchanged a few words with the chief of cavalry and then rode on.

The cuirassier came up to his new officer and saluted, saying:

"Here is the carriage, my captain."

"What did the marshal say to you just now?" asked Gabriel.

"He asked who owned that carriage, and I told him, my captain. Then he said to me: 'Take it to him, and tell him to be off where I told him.'"

Gabriel dismounted and Casse Tete took his horse by the bridle. The captain got into the carriage and drove off on a side road which led to Nordlingen as they saw from a guide-board.

They passed on quietly without further adventures over roads full of scattered parties of French light cavalry by whom they were frequently halted and questioned but always allowed to proceed.

The sun was setting as they came in sight of the Blue Danube at the town of Nordlingen where they found the whole country covered with French bivouacs, and Gabriel realized that the circuit was complete.

The Austrians were shut in at Ulm.

Our hero had no difficulty in finding the quarters of Marshal Bessieres who as chief of the Imperial Guard was also Provost Marshal General, and to him he reported under arrest agreeably to the orders received from Murat.

Bessieres was a pleasant gray-haired man, who looked more like a priest than a soldier, and he laughed when he heard what Murat had done.

"He adores those dark men, captain," he said, "and he knows that they don't like you for being a blonde. You were right to obey his orders. You are released from arrest! Have you anything to tell his majesty?"

Gabriel hesitated.

"I have no positive orders, marshal; but I was told if I came across his majesty in my travels to give him a package of maps and plans."

"Very good," answered Bessieres, looking as if the news pleased him. "You'll find the tents of Marshal Berthier, chief of staff, on the knoll yonder. Report to him and tell him what you have."

To the head-quarter tents drove Gabriel, where the chief of staff received his bundle of papers and told him:

"Wait here. His majesty will be pleased at this. You have done well, sir."

He disappeared in an inner tent and soon reappeared beckoning in Gabriel.

They found the little man in the green coat sprawling on the ground on a huge map which he was ornamenting with large pins having heads of colored sealing-wax. As Gabriel entered he looked up and nodded.

"You've done well, captain. I never mistake my men. Where are you going now, or have you no orders?"

"I am on my way to Berlin, unless your majesty has different orders."

The emperor's face twitched, according to the nervous habit he had when thinking, and he said to Berthier:

"Send him with mademoiselle and a squadron of his regiment as escort. No. Twenty men are enough. One cannot be too cautious with these Prussians. If they take offense we shall have trouble. Tell him to be off to-night."

Then, without another word, he turned to his map and his pins, and Gabriel saw that the pins were ranged in a circle around another pin which was set on the town of Ulm. He had caught the emperor planning out the surrender.

Berthier motioned him out and told him to wait in the ante-room tent, while he gave some orders to officers.

Gabriel not knowing exactly what was to come of it all, waited in some curiosity, till he heard the jingling of cuirassiers outside the tent, and Berthier called him.

He found, outside, his own carriage, and in to this the marshal was just handing a young lady, whose back was turned to him, while a

second lady, with gray hair and a fair German face was leaning from the carriage, speaking to Berthier.

Casse Tete was standing in rear of the carriage holding his new master's horse, and a party of the Death's Head Cuirassiers headed by a grim old sergeant, were in rear of Casse Tete.

The marshal handed in the young lady, and said, with a bow to the other:

"It will be all right now, Madame la Marquise. The escort will save you from trouble in our lines, and, once in Prussia, you will find matters peaceful."

"And you are sure, marshal, that there are no more Austrians on the road?" asked the elderly lady, anxiously. "I'm sure I should expire with fear, if I were to find that we were in the midst of another such a scene as we had yesterday."

Berthier smiled.

"The Austrians are all safe in Ulm," he answered, "except a few who are on their way to the Tyrol. You will see none but French till you come on the Prussian frontier. Farewell, madame. This officer will attend to your wants."

Then he turned to Gabriel.

"You'll take command of this escort, and take these ladies to Berlin, captain. The escort will accompany you to the frontier and as far beyond as the Prussians will let you go. If they turn them back, send them with the sergeant, take off your uniform and proceed alone with the ladies. I have been obliged to press your carriage into the service. You will give this dispatch to General Duroc on your arrival and report Madame la Marquise de St. Jean, and Mademoiselle Inez de Real, fiancée to the Prince of Potsdam. You will treat the ladies with the utmost deference on the way and take any road that will lead to Berlin. Farewell, captain."

He touched his hat formally and turned away; Hans, the postillion, who looked as if he were entirely bewildered, cracked his whip; Casse Tete brought up his master's horse and away trotted carriage and escort, Gabriel feeling very much as if the marshal had dashed a pail of cold water down his back.

For the name Inez de Real had been uttered just as the young lady leaned forward to look out of the carriage and he had recognized the features of the pretty maid of honor he had seen by the Fountain of Diana, and whom he had inwardly sworn to make his countess as soon as he should be a count and a general.

And now here he was escorting this very Inez to marry the man of all others he disliked and despised, the Prince of Potsdam.

She was the fiancée of the prince.

On rolled the carriage into the dusk of the evening along smooth roads lit up by the glare of innumerable bivouac fires, and as they passed along Gabriel could see that the whole face of the country was covered with French troops, who seemed to be in the best spirits for they were singing in all directions.

But as for himself he was in no mood for singing now. He was only revolving in his own head all sorts of plans by which he could cheat the Prince of Potsdam of his expected bride and carry her off himself.

It was a characteristic of this fair and determined young man that his courage rose with obstacles, and he never quailed under any odds. Therefore, as he rode on through the dusk he was only thinking how he should accomplish his end. It never entered his head that Inez might be going willingly to marry the prince.

"No," he said to himself, "she is too good a Frenchwoman to wish to marry this cursed Prussian. They are forcing her to it."

He had noticed when she looked out that her face was pale and had a sad weary look.

"No wonder," he thought; "but I'll save her from this rascal."

So the carriage rolled along till they came to the bridge of Nordlingen and had crossed the Danube and arrived at the outposts of the French army.

Here they were halted by a patrol of hussars and as soon as the officer in charge heard who they were he said to Gabriel:

"You'd better be careful on this road, captain. Our patrols have been fired on more than once during the day and it is my impression that the band of that scamp Schinderhannes is at the bottom of the trouble. Our advance has made it too hot for him in the Black Forest and along the Rhine, so he is hanging on the

rear of the army seeking for what he can pick up in the way of plunder."

Gabriel thanked him and rode on. He began to feel anxious.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BERLIN ROAD.

THEY rode on most of the night without any adventures, though Gabriel could hear at intervals the hoofs of horses in the rear, telling that some one was following; but, as the morning dawned, he began to be sensible that the horses of the escort were giving out while the carriage was reduced to a slow trot.

They had been unable to secure post-horses all night, the animals having been taken into the service of the army; and Gabriel foresaw that he would soon have to halt or dismiss the escort if he found horses. As the sun rose, however, they came to a post-house out of the range of French foraging parties, and here they found that there were plenty of horses at last.

The postmaster, when he was applied to, looked puzzled when he saw the glittering party of cuirassiers, and said:

"Certainly, Herr Officer, I can give you horses for the carriage; but not for all this party. Besides, they will not let you cross the frontier, which is only a mile beyond."

"Why not?" asked Gabriel.

"Eh, do you not know, Herr Officer, that the French have violated Prussian territory in their advance and that the King of Prussia is furious and swears that he will go to war if he does not have an apology?"

This was news to Gabriel, but he pretended innocence, took his horses and rode on with his escort till they came to a house by the roadside where he found a whole company of Prussian infantry waiting, with a red-faced captain in command.

As they came to the house, the Prussians were seen ostentatiously loading their guns, and the captain called out:

"Halt! we want no French soldiers here. This is Prussian ground."

Gabriel halted his men, rode up, and told who he was and on what errand.

The red-faced captain replied:

"The soldiers must turn back. You can go on alone if you wish, but not in uniform. The orders are strict."

"Can my groom follow with my horse?" asked Gabriel.

"No. If that man is your servant, he can ride on the box, but you cannot go into Prussia in this guise."

Here the marquise put out her head.

"What does the man say, captain?" she asked nervously. "Are they going to fight any more? If they do, I shall die."

Gabriel smiled.

"No, madame. We have arrived at Prussian territory and they will not let me proceed any further unless I get into the carriage and send back the escort."

The marquise bowed graciously.

"Certainly, monsieur. We shall be charmed to have a companion; for in truth it is very dull traveling alone."

The young lady said nothing, but Gabriel fancied he saw her face brighten up a little as he dismounted and came to the carriage door.

But again the Prussian captain interposed.

"You cannot cross our frontier in that uniform. Have you no plain clothes with you, monsieur?"

Gabriel laughed.

"Certainly; but where am I to dress? Not in the road, before ladies. Let me go on to the next post-house where I can get a room and breakfast."

Somewhat unwillingly the captain gave his consent, and Gabriel had the pleasure of seeing his late escort moving slowly off on the road to Nordlingen, while Casse Tete took his seat on the box, in his heavy accouterments, as if he had been a footman all his life.

He cast a regretful glance after the two horses as they were led away, muttering:

"I hope we'll not be sorry for losing you before we've done this journey, my beauties."

In truth a cuirassier without his horse feels like a fish out of water. He is not used to fighting on foot, like a hussar or dragoon.

Gabriel himself entered the carriage with a bow to the ladies, and they drove on into the Prussian territory, where everything seemed to be as quiet as the grave for several miles, till the carriage suddenly halted in the middle of a wood, and Gabriel heard the voice of Casse Tete, calling:

"Out, my captain, out! A cursed Prussian trick!"

The marquise began to scream. Inez turned very pale and instinctively caught hold of the young cuirassier's arm, and Gabriel with a curt:

"Excuse me, ladies."

Caught up his pistols from the carriage pocket, opened the door and jumped out, to find two men at the horse's heads and four more covering Casse Tete and the postillion with leveled carbines.

There was no mistaking the vocation of the men; they were unmitigated ruffians and Gabriel thought at once of Schinderhannes.

This robber was as noted during the early Napoleonic wars, as had been Dick Turpin in England a century before. He had ravaged the frontiers of France and Germany impartially, and had come to Prussia when the Grand Army had swept through his native haunts.

The cuirassier stood and eyed the men without flinching. On the contrary his mien was that of a jester as he said:

"Well, gentlemen, what do you wish?"

"Your purses and jewels," answered one of the ruffians, "and be quick about it."

"On the contrary, gentlemen," answered Gabriel, "if you do not at once retire from this road I shall be obliged to kill you all."

"Bang, bang!"

The words were not uttered when two of the robbers fired at him, within a dozen feet.

But Gabriel knew what he was about. He had been standing half sidewise to them in such a position that bullets were nearly certain to glance, and these two bullets did glance from his cuirass.

In another moment he had leveled his long holster pistols, shot down two of the ruffians, and then flashed out his long sword and rushed at them.

Casse Tete, in the same moment fired his pistol, and then came clattering down from the box.

Two of the robbers were killed, a third was wounded, and the two big cuirassiers made short work of the other three, though they fought desperately with their clubbed carbines. But the physical disproportion between two six-footers of vigorous frame and three men of ordinary size, together with the skill and force of training bred in the cuirassiers of the guard by long practice made the fight a short one, and then Casse Tete said, as he wiped his sword:

"They're gone, captain; but on my word it will do no harm to take their carbines and boxes. There may be more of them in the woods, and pistols don't shoot far enough for this sort of work. I wish we had our horses here."

They picked up four carbines, loaded them from the boxes of the dead men, and then drove on, Casse Tete keeping three of the guns on the box beside him.

As for Gabriel, on his return to the carriage he was overwhelmed with thanks by the marquise, while the young lady bestowed on him a glance that amply repaid him for all his trials.

Then as they went on for the first time he ventured to go into conversation with the ladies, who had hitherto been very distant in their manner.

"Do you think, captain," asked the marquise nervously, "that the Prussians wanted us to be robbed and murdered?"

"No, madame; but those fellows had been following us all night as I think in the hope that our escort would be turned back as it was. I heard at Nordlingen that Schinderhannes had been hanging about on the rear of our army picking up what he could devour."

"And who is this Schinderhannes?" asked the young lady in a tone of some curiosity.

"You will excuse me, monsieur le capitaine, if I do not know your French celebrities, but I have only lived in France a few months since I came from the island of Martinique."

Then Gabriel knew how the fair Inez came to be maid of honor to the empress, for Josephine was well known to be very fond of Creoles, being one herself.

He enlightened the mind of the fair Inez on the subject of Schinderhannes who was well known to him as an Alsatian, and soon found himself engaged in an animated conversation with both the ladies who seemed disposed to treat him with the utmost courtesy now that they were wholly dependent on him for protection.

They experienced no further trouble on

their way through the wood and arrived safely at the post-house and changed their horse there.

Here Gabriel informed the postmaster of what had happened and that official expressed unbounded surprise and dismay at the fact that brigands had made their appearance on Prussian territory. He sent off a courier at once to alarm the nearest military post, and half-way on the next stage, Gabriel saw a troop of hussars riding rapidly for the frontier and he felt that their troubles were over for the present.

They had nothing to do but to post to Berlin and, even in those days, before railroads were thought of, it was quite possible to travel rapidly by post-horses.

They rolled on, therefore, all that day and night and the next, and on the morning of the third day, as they changed horses at the posting inn, the landlord told them that it was the last stage to Berlin. Before nine o'clock they were rolling over the pavements of the city, and the young officer asked the marquise:

"Where does madame wish to go? To the French embassy?"

"Eh, *mon Dieu*, no!" cried the old lady, with something as near a blush as her wrinkles allowed. "General Duroc is a bachelor, and it would not be admissible. No, monsieur, we will drive straight to the palace of the Princess of Potsdam, who has promised to receive us till the prince returns from his mission. You have met the prince, doubtless?"

"Yes," said Gabriel shortly. His eyes at that moment caught those of Inez, and he had the satisfaction of seeing a look of disgust pass over her countenance, which he ascribed to the mention of his rival's name.

"And is he not a charming man!" said Madame de St. Jean, enthusiastically. "So handsome and distinguished, with that air of high breeding which only belongs to princes of the blood."

Gabriel did not reply that he thought differently, for his short diplomatic experience had taught him to conceal his thoughts, and it was clear that Madame de St. Jean was an ardent partisan of the prince. Instead of that, he listened as the marquise went on:

"I told her majesty that it was an honor that few French ladies could afford to neglect, that of an alliance with one of the first families in Europe. Why, it is quite possible that mademoiselle here might one day, through her descendants, come to the very throne of Prussia, and thrones are not to be picked up every day."

Again Gabriel caught the eye of Inez and saw there inexpressible weariness and disgust, so he asked:

"This mission, on which the prince has gone, madame, do you know what it is?"

Madame St. Jean nodded her head in a mysterious way.

"I may know a great deal, captain, that I am not at liberty to tell. You, as a man in diplomacy, know that there are secrets of State that must not be spoken of. But here is the palace, I perceive. Your man will announce us."

Gabriel took the hint and left the carriage himself. He had resumed plain clothes since his arrival in Prussian territory and went to the door himself, where he announced to a pompous porter the arrival of Madame de St. Jean and Medemoiselle de Real, to see the Princess of Potsdam.

A few moments later a crowd of liveried servants came out and the two ladies were ushered into the palace, a large, gloomy-looking building, while Gabriel, feeling very disconsolate at the loss of Inez, drove away to the French legation, where he reported to his chief and told him what he had done, including his informal duel with the Prince of Potsdam, Murat's rebuke and the escort with which he had been honored.

General Duroc listened with interest, and took the dispatches which the emperor had sent him, which he perused carefully. When he had finished, he looked at Gabriel in a manner indicative of surprise.

"You say his majesty intrusted you with the escort of the Princess of Potsdam, that is to be?"

"Yes, general."

"And you left the Prince of Potsdam at the other side of our army?"

"Yes, general."

Duroc looked at him again in the same singular way and asked, dryly:

"Captain Lenoir, did you ever make love in your life?"

Gabriel flushed scarlet.

"No, general—that is—no, general."

"Very well, sir, then it is time you began. We go to a grand ball at the palace to-night, and this Mademoiselle Real will be there with her old she-dragon in attendance. You understand, captain, that I cannot keep my *attaches* from amusing themselves, and you are a good-looking fellow. It will be perfectly proper for you to show attention to these French ladies, who have no friends in Berlin till the prince comes. By-the-by, how long, think you, will it be before the prince is entirely well of his little thrust in the shoulder?"

"About a month, general."

"Very good. You have three weeks, then, in which to use your time as becomes a gallant Frenchman. It is necessary to keep things in suspense here. You don't fail to understand me, I suppose?"

"I think not, general."

And Gabriel felt a strange hope rise in his heart.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE BALL.

THAT night Hercule Forton, surnamed Casse Tete, came to his new master and said, in an awkward way:

"Please, captain, may I have leave of absence from dressing-hour to-morrow morning on a little private business?"

Casse Tete had dropped his uniform in Berlin, and subsided into a plain, dark livery, in which his grim face and bony figure made him look like a professional mourner at a funeral.

Gabriel looked at him in some surprise.

"From dressing hour? I don't understand."

Casse Tete looked shocked.

"Of course, now that your honor is an officer of rank, it is not fitting to the dignity of a captain of the Death's Heads to dress himself, and it is my duty, as the orderly of monsieur, to see that he is properly waited on."

"Oh, I see. But you have not done it yet on the journey hither, Casse Tete."

"That was because we were in campaign, monsieur. Now we have come among these accursed Prussians, we must sustain the dignity of France."

Gabriel smiled.

"Very well, Casse Tete; as you please. We will commence to-morrow morning."

Casse Tete coughed.

"Please, my captain, that was why I asked you to excuse me. I have a little affair on my hands to-morrow."

"An affair with whom?"

"Please, my captain, it is with one of these Prussian Cuirassiers of the Guard. They think there is no one like them, and one of them was bragging last night that the Prussian cavalry was the best in the whole world. So I told him he was much mistaken; that the French cuirassiers could beat all the Prussians to be found, and that our Marshal Murat was the greatest man in the world in a charge."

"Well," said Gabriel, smiling, "and what said he to that?"

Casse Tete scratched his head.

"*Ma foi, capitaine*, he only laughed, and told me that our *beau sabreur* couldn't hold a candle to their General Seidlitz, a man I'd never heard of. So I said: 'I never heard of Seidlitz, but I've heard of Seidlitz powders as good for a sour stomach,' and what do you think he said to that, captain?"

Gabriel laughed.

"I'm sure I don't know."

"He said, captain—think of it—the powders were named after the general, because he went through the French so badly at a place called Rossbach, fifty years before. So I told him he lied, and slapped him. We are to have it out behind the Royal Stables in the morning."

Gabriel could not help laughing at the grim earnestness of Casse Tete in his belief that the Prussian had told him a lie about the French having been beaten, but he said:

"Do you know, Casse Tete, I'm afraid he told the truth! There was a battle of Rossbach fifty years ago, and the French were very badly beaten by Frederick the Great."

Casse Tete looked vexed.

"All the same, my captain, I told him he lied, and I'm going to prove it."

"What do you fight with?" asked Gabriel.

"I take my *lath*, captain, and he trusts to his German tool, called a *palasch*."

The straight cuirassier sword of the French army is nicknamed "the lath," and the German weapon has its own name of "the spit."

Gabriel gave his consent to the duel, and Casse Tete seemed to be satisfied, for his countenance became radiant and he observed, confidentially:

"Between us two, my captain, there is no love lost between us French and these cursed Prussians. I heard something to-day that would astonish you."

Gabriel, hardly imagining that his orderly could have heard anything of importance, nevertheless asked him:

"Well, what have you heard?"

"I heard that there is more going on at the palace than they know about at Paris," replied Casse Tete, mysteriously. "Your honor knows that in these palaces there are doors and passages all over; and that servants *will* listen to find out what they can. And when they find out anything, they are never easy till they have told it to some friend."

"Well, and what have you heard?" again asked the young officer.

Casse Tete came closer and looked round, as if he suspected listeners:

"Please, your honor, the king's barber is a Frenchman, and so is his majesty's cook; and, what is more, they are good Frenchman; not like those traitors of royalists."

"And you have made friends of them?"

"Of course, my captain. As soon as they heard there was a Gascon at the French embassy, the king's cook sent me over a delicious little pie of game, and I could do no less than pay him a visit. I was received in his private chamber. Oh, monsieur, they know how to treat artists in Berlin. The cook is lodged like a noble. And there I was introduced to Monsieur Pantoufle, the barber, and between us we made a day of it."

"Well, well, Casse Tete, this is interesting, of course; but what did you hear?"

"I heard, monsieur, that the King of Prussia is getting ready for war, and further that it is his intention to forbid the marriage of the Prince of Potsdam to the French lady we brought here, unless the emperor gives him satisfaction for walking over his land to get at those Austrians."

"And how do you know that?"

"*Parbleu!* my captain, Monsieur Pantoufle heard him say this morning as he was shaving: 'Wait till this Corsican gets well toward Vienna, too far to escape. We will show him that we are not asleep.'"

"And to whom was the king speaking?"

"To the Minister of State, my captain, and they talked German, so that Pantoufle could not understand them, as they thought. But our countryman is no fool. He will not talk their accursed tongue, but he can understand it for all that. And then the minister said: 'We must be patient, your majesty, till we have Hanover safe. If we make the demand now, he may come back on us and leave Austria alone; but if we wait till he gets to Vienna, we can have our own way.' Then they both laughed, and Pantoufle heard no more, for he had finished shaving the king and had to come away from the room."

"And that is all you've heard?"

"All, my captain; but a sign is enough for a Gascon. It may be as well, I thought, that my captain should know this."

"You did right to tell me. I will go and see General Duroc at once!"

So, Gabriel sought his chief, and told him the little bit of gossip he had heard.

Duroc nodded, as if well pleased.

"I knew it all along, captain; but I am glad they talk of it openly to each other. It is important to keep the Prussians quiet till the emperor has thrashed the Austrians thoroughly. By the way, you may find it necessary to keep up the honor of France before some of these young officers of the Guards to-night. My position forbids me to fight, you know, but in your case—I suppose you can fence well?"

"Passably, general."

Then he departed, thinking to himself what a strange kind of business he was in, when his chief wanted him to fight duels and make love to ladies at balls, as part of his regular duties.

That night our hero was at the ball in the palace according to his orders, and a gay scene he found it. Uniforms of every nation in Europe; bright dresses of ladies; the glitter of gold lace and diamonds; the presence of roy-

alty itself, all combined to dazzle the young man, whose duties had hitherto kept him roaming about the country far from the atmosphere of courts.

There was however, something so seductive in the scene; so many people bowed to him, recognizing him as the French *attache*, that he soon forgot all about the reason why he had come there, and was recalled to himself by a voice at his elbow, saying:

"Ah, monsieur le capitaine, and have you already forgotten your charges on the way?"

He looked round, and there was the Marquise de St. Jean, smiling amiably through her wrinkles, as she leaned on the arm of a pompous old Prussian general, who had not yet left off the powder and pigtail of the days of the Great Frederick.

"This is Captain Lenoir, general, of whom I was telling you, who protected us so bravely from those frightful robbers," she went on.

Then to Gabriel in a whisper.

"It is the old Prince of Potsdam the father of our prince. He is own cousin to the king."

Meantime the old prince eyed Gabriel over his white stock as if he thought him some objectionable sort of a beast, and favored him with the coldest of nods, saying:

"Been long in Berlin?"

"I arrived yesterday, prince."

"Which way came you?"

"From the Austrian Tyrol into Bavaria and so hither through Munich and Nordlingen."

The old prince deigned to look interested.

"Indeed! Did you come across my son there?"

"I met Monsieur le Prince in Bavaria," said Gabriel quietly, "and when we parted company he promised to follow as soon as possible."

"The young dog!" growled the old prince. "He ought to fly here, on the wings of love, as he knows what is come to him."

Then he passed on with the marquise, and soon after Lenoir caught sight of the dark rich oval of Inez de Real's face, as she passed to a seat, escorted by a handsome young officer of the Red Hussars, who seemed to be much struck with her.

Gabriel lost no time in making up to the lady of his secret affections, who greeted him with a sweet smile and accepted his arm at once, dropping that of the Red Hussar in a manner as frankly pleasing to Gabriel as it was displeasing to the red Prussian.

The latter watched the tall cuirassier take away the lady, and his eye flashed with hatred of the Frenchman. Then he strode away to the corner of the ball-room, where were standing quite a large group of his brother officers, and they engaged in an earnest and excited colloquy.

Meantime Gabriel was playing the agreeable to the best of his powers, with such success that the lady beside him suddenly said:

"Oh, Monsieur Lenoir, I have no one here to confide in but you. You are a French soldier and the empress has taught me that I can trust at all times to a French soldier."

"You certainly can in me, mademoiselle," said Gabriel, his heart beating rapidly.

"Then, monsieur, I tell you that I hate this marriage that I am about to make. I hate it. I abhor it," said the girl in low passionate tones. "The emperor forces me to it and I dare not disobey him, save to do one thing."

"And what is that, mademoiselle?"

"Take refuge in the cloister," she said in the same low voice. "Oh, monsieur, something in your face told me, from the moment I first saw you on guard at the Pavilion of Diana, that you were a man to trust. Monsieur, will you help me to escape from this place and flee to a convent?"

Gabriel was so much astounded at this sudden burst of confidence that he could only repeat vaguely:

"A convent? You!"

"Yes, a convent rather than a wedding with him," she replied with a slight shudder.

"There are convents in Bavaria, in Spain, even in France. In one of them I shall be safe. Only say you will help me escape."

Gabriel bowed his head.

"I will help you to the last drop of my blood," he said simply. "When do you wish to go away, and where?"

"I will send you a note to-morrow," she said softly. "Now we are watched. There is the marquise coming this way."

As Gabriel resigned his charge to her duenna he felt a tap on his arm. Turning, he saw two cuirassier officers.

CHAPTER X.

A LITTLE AFFAIR.

THE two cuirassier officers were nearly as tall as Gabriel, and they were both staring at him in a manner indicative of great hostility, thinly veiled by politeness.

Gabriel saw that they belonged to the Royal Guards, who still kept up the stiff and pompous uniform of the previous century.

They wore their hair powdered and pig-tailed while their mustaches curled fiercely up to their eyes as they looked at Gabriel.

"Well, gentlemen," said he blandly, "in what can I have the pleasure of serving you?"

"We have the honor," answered one of the cuirassiers in a deep base voice, "to be the bearers to monsieur of a message from the Baron of Damanhauer."

"And who is the baron?" asked Gabriel.

"I have not the honor of his acquaintance."

"Possibly, monsieur. Nevertheless he is well known as the major of the Red Hussars of the Guard."

"Indeed? And what does he want of me?"

"An apology, monsieur, for your conduct this evening toward himself, and his cousin, his Serene Highness the Prince of Potsdam."

Gabriel was puzzled. It was evident that these men were trying to pick a quarrel with him, but on what grounds?

"Gentlemen," he said, "be pleased to explain yourselves. I do not know either the baron or you. Who are you?"

"I am Captain Count Hoffman, of the White Cuirassiers," answered the other, stiffly, "and this, my friend, is Lieutenant von Schilling, of my squadron. The baron being in attendance on the lady who is shortly to become the Princess of Potsdam, declares that you rudely took advantage of her being a Frenchwoman, and carried her away from him without even the formality of asking him to excuse you. The baron demands an apology."

"Then the baron will not get it," replied Gabriel, sharply. "I talk to whom I please, and ask no man's permission."

"Then monsieur will please refer us to his friend at once," replied Count Hoffman, stiffly. "Monsieur must know that a lady affianced to a member of the Prussian court belongs to us, and that in taking her away from a Prussian officer of the Guard he insults the whole Guard."

Gabriel stared.

"The whole Guard! Am I to understand, then, that I am expected to fight the whole Guard if I do not apologize to the baron?"

The count twirled his mustache.

"For the present, only the Red Hussars. If they fail to finish you, we shall have our turn."

"Then, monsieur," said Gabriel, "it will do me pleasure to begin with you, who are the advancer of a preposterous doctrine to which I will not submit. I will fight you, if you wish it; but as for the baron, he and his Red Hussars can cool their courage in waiting. I'll not fight them for nothing. If they choose to attack me, let them look out for themselves. One good cuirassier ought to beat a dozen hussars."

The count waited till he had finished, and then replied, eagerly:

"It will afford me pleasure to take the place of the baron. Name your friend."

Gabriel named a Spanish officer who belonged to the legation, and was one of the few friends he had in Berlin, where the French embassy was representing a nation at war, at once, with England, Russia and Austria.

Count Hoffman and his friend bowed stiffly, and went off in search of Don Luis Carrera, while Gabriel left the ball and returned to the embassy.

He sought and found General Duroc in his private cabinet writing dispatches, and reported to him all that had happened in the matter of the duel.

Duroc nodded.

"Very good. Fight the count and kill him. Did you see the young lady and make love to her as I told you?"

Gabriel flushed scarlet. This frankness was a little too strong for him. He could bear to report his duels, but his love affairs were another thing.

"I am not at liberty to answer, general," he finally said, in the driest of tones.

Duroc smiled and went on writing.

Presently he looked up.

"You are a discreet man," he said, "so I can trust you with a secret. The emperor, as you know, jumped you over the heads of a

whole regiment from recruit to captain in a single day. Of course all the others are furiously jealous of you, and it will only be by the greatest risks that you can keep your place. I have found out that the Prussian officers here have resolved to kill you, if they can, and after your duel with this count you will probably have to fight about twenty more. If you, on the contrary, kill three or four of them, it will be necessary for you to leave the embassy. When you leave it, there is nothing in the world to prevent you from making a romantic flight, and all you have to do is to tell me how much money you need. That is all, sir. Report to-morrow morning at noon what you have done. Good-night."

And General Duroc turned to his writing again with a jerk. He had fallen into the habit of doing everything abruptly, after the manner of the master he adored. It was a noticeable trait of many around the person of the emperor that they mimicked his peculiarities of body.

As for Gabriel, he went away to his own room thinking deeply over what had happened. He had often wondered at his own good luck in being promoted so suddenly and being assigned to such pleasant duties, but he began to see the reason now. The emperor expected him to undertake such desperate service that the chances of his ever getting back alive to the regiment were small.

"But if there is one chance in a hundred," thought he, "I'll take it. I am to win Inez if I can, that is plain. What would he say if he knew she had asked me to run away with her—to a convent, it is true, but still to run away with her?"

His reflections were disturbed by a tap at the door, and Casse Tete locked in.

"Don Luis Carrera, of the Spanish embassy, to see my captain."

"Show him in at once."

Don Luis entered, a gay young Spaniard, whose face was unusually grave that night as he said:

"It's all arranged, Lenoir. You are to fight in the Deer Forest at six in the morning with swords or sabers as you prefer."

"Sabers, then," replied Gabriel. "They are the quickest in my hands. Have you made any limits as to the number of attendants? I have found out that these Prussian officers have a conspiracy to kill me."

Don Luis looked surprised.

"No, I saw no evidences of it; but in that case I shall see that our side is not left in the dark. We have three in our legation and there is the Portuguese embassy, too. You shall not be assassinated, I promise you."

Don Luis took his leave, promising to be at the legation in time, and Gabriel arranged his papers and tried to sleep but found it to be difficult on account of the unwonted excitement under which he labored.

A duel was nothing; he had fought them before and knew himself to be as good a fencer as any *maitre d'armes* in France. But a series of duels with all the officers of a whole regiment was a different thing.

Therefore Gabriel caught but little sleep that night and was not sorry to be roused an hour before daybreak by his friend Carrera, who came with several other gentlemen, muffled in long Spanish cloaks, and proved to be as many gay young Spaniards, armed to the teeth and all anxious for the coming affair.

The party occupied two carriages and drove out into the Deer Forest—so called—some miles from Berlin, where affairs of honor were usually settled.

They drove on rapidly through the growing dawn and just as the gray light became clear the carriage turned down an old side road faintly marked with wheel-tracks and finally drew up in the midst of a green clearing, shut in on all sides by brown fading woods.

In this clearing were gathered at least a dozen officers of cuirassiers, who bowed formally as the carriages drove up.

When Gabriel's party alighted, threw off their long cloaks and disclosed the fact that each gentleman had a carbine and a pair of pistols, there was a general murmur of anger from the cuirassiers, and Lieutenant Schilling exclaimed:

"What does this mean, messieurs?"

"It means," said Don Luis, sharply, "that we are not going to be forced into an unequal and unfair contest, gentlemen. What do you mean by bringing so many of your friends to witness this duel. You all wear swords, I per-

ceive. Very well, we wear pistols, also. If you want a fair duel we are ready. If you want a general mob quarrel we are ready, too."

His words had their effect on the Prussians, who saw that their plan of killing the obnoxious Frenchman was of no avail in the face of fire-arms and they cooled down and protested they had no such intentions as Don Luis suspected.

"Then," said Carrera, sternly, "bring on your man. Here is mine, ready, for one duel to-day and no more."

Count Hoffman was then disclosed in the midst of his friends, looking red and ashamed of himself at the detection of the trick he had intended, and he and Gabriel proceeded to strip off their outer clothes and were brought face to face sword in hand.

They presented a close match in size but there was no question as to the physical superiority of the young French officer, whose muscles stood out prominently while those of his enemy were obscured by fat.

The swords clashed, both men sprung back out of measure, then Gabriel ran in, with an active feint he had learned from his old *maitre d'armes*, and with one cut laid open the count's right shoulder, disabling him in a moment.

The duel was over almost ere it had begun, and the faces of the cuirassiers looked so blank and rueful that Gabriel said:

"I understand your regiment has taken an oath to challenge me, officer by officer. If so I am ready to fight two more of you this morning, one at a time."

The taunt produced an immediate effect, and another officer tore off his coat, picked up Count Hoffman's sword and faced the French cuirassier boldly.

This time the duel began in a fierce attack by the German, who forced Gabriel to fall back several paces by his ardor.

But no sooner did he begin to flag in his fierce attack than the Alsatian came in to a close rally in which the swords were almost invisible for a few moments. It was ended by a groan from the German as a broad stream of blood spurted from his cheek as he staggered back nearly blinded by a cross slash of Gabriel's sword.

"Who comes next?" cried our hero, in a taunting tone. "You may as well see what you have to expect, gentlemen."

"I'll fight him but it must be with the small sword," cried a third officer.

Lenoir laughed proudly.

"I let the others off," he said. "As for you, the small sword will do your business better than the saber."

The rapiers were produced, long, slender toys in appearance; and with these the third officer tried his luck.

Gabriel, taking advantage of his great height and reach, lunged at the same moment with his antagonist, who was a shorter man, and ran him through the body at the moment the German's sword tore a hole in his shirt, but missed his back.

The effect of the third duel was stunning on the Germans. They looked as if they had found a lion in the path, and when the Alsatian beckoned with his dripping sword for a fourth no one stirred.

Then Gabriel threw down his weapon and said aloud:

"When any other gentleman wishes to find me I shall be at the legation. I have the honor to wish you good-day."

He turned away amid a dead silence and resumed his clothes, re-entered his coach and was driven back to Berlin.

The cuirassiers were left with one dead man on their hands and two more badly hurt.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NOTE.

WHEN Gabriel got back to the embassy it was about ten o'clock, and he found the familiar figure of Casse Tete waiting for him bolt upright.

Casse Tete's face was ornamented with a strip of black sticking-plaster that ran down one cheek, exactly opposite to the scar that divided his mustache on the other side, and Gabriel observed:

"Ah, Casse Tete, did you catch that to-day, about Rosbach and Seidlitz powders?"

Casse Tete grinned.

"The fortune of war, my captain. These cursed Prussians never fight fair. I'd cut him

down, and by all the rules he was a dead man, when he gave me that slash. It is a mere nothing, but I was so angry at his unprofessional way of fighting that I spitted him as he lay."

"And is he really dead now?"

"Yes, my captain, and he won't tell any more lies about Seidlitz powders. Your honor had a little affair, too, I see."

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Heard it from the coachman, my captain. These coachmen can't keep a secret. There was a ladies' maid here this morning for your honor, who left this note."

Gabriel started. He could not help it. Then Casse Tete, with a furtive wink of great slyness, produced from the recesses of his pockets successively a tobacco-box, an old black pipe, a red silk handkerchief that was rapidly turning brown, and finally a small white note on which Gabriel instantly pounced and bore it off to his chamber to devour in peace.

It mattered nothing to him that it was scented with the strongest of black tobacco and crumpled and stained from its long sojourn in Casse Tete's pocket. He knew that it came from her, and that was enough. Once in his room he locked the door and read these words:

"MONSIEUR: I know that you are a man that will not take advantage of my over-confidence. I came here by order of the emperor, who wished me, for State reasons, to marry the Prince of Potsdam. I would rather die than marry him, and I wish to enter a convent. There is, in the duchy of Austria, near a little village called Austerlitz, a convent whose superior is a distant relative of my mother. I am not safe in any part of the French or Prussian dominions; but in Austria they would leave me in peace. Will you, dare you help me to escape into the Austrian lines? If you dare, have a carriage and horses ready to-night, and I will steal out of the palace at nine, and meet you. I trust to the honor of a French soldier. INEZ DE REAL."

When Gabriel had finished it, he sat for some time considering.

He was madly in love with Inez, but he was also a French soldier, and here was this girl asking him to take her inside the enemy's lines out of the power of the emperor.

He did not know exactly what to do, and concluded to ask General Duroc in such a guarded way that the ambassador should not suspect the truth.

When he sought Duroc, the other looked at him in a quizzical way, saying:

"Captain Lenoir, do you know you have the devil's own luck with you? I did not expect to see you back alive, and here you are without a scratch."

Gabriel told him the event of the triple duel and Duroc laughed heartily.

"So the Spaniard was too much for the slow German. It is very well. But, do you know I have just received news about you that will compel me to give you leave of absence for awhile? It appears that you were not content with slashing these Germans, but must needs go and kill one of them. That is rash, captain, and they take advantage of it."

The king has sent me a passport for you to leave Prussia within twenty-four hours, commanding every one to give you horses, but insisting on your going at once. Do you know who was the gentleman you killed, my friend?"

"No, general."

"He is a grand nephew of General Ziether, who was so famous fifty years ago, and the king is furious. I will make use of you in your misfortune, however. You are to go any way you please, the shorter the better. Now, the shortest way out of Berlin is due south, which will take you into Austrian territory. Do you think you can pass again for a Prussian at a pinch, and take a little trip for me through Austria in rear of the armies?"

"I have done it once, general," said Gabriel, slowly, "but I admit I do not relish the task of a spy. If I am taken you know what will be my fate."

Duroc nodded.

"I know it. But if you succeed in getting to the emperor's head-quarters alive, there is something in store for you there."

"And what is that, general?"

"Eh parbleu, not much; only Major Delsarte was killed in one of the battles at Ulm and you are now on the rolls as Major Lenoir. Promotion is quick in these times, major, and there is a talk of putting Colonel Lenoir at the head of a brigade of cavalry. If so, there will be more promotions. You understand?"

Duroc watched the young man closely as he dropped bait after bait to his hearer's ambition. Finally Gabriel said:

"Give me your instructions, general, and I will try to obey them."

"Here they are, captain. Here, you see, are two passports. One of them is genuine, for you, as Captain Lenoir of the French legation to leave Prussia in haste. I would use it till you cross the lines. The other is made out for Count Schwartz, as before; and on that you will have to travel in Austria as a Prussian nobleman on a special mission to Vienna. Do as you think best, when you get there. I want you to ascertain in what force the Russian army, which is reported as advancing to the help of Austria, is moving, and at what point it is likely the emperor will meet it. By-the-by, I suppose you know Mack surrendered at Ulm with fifty thousand men and all his guns and train?"

"I suspected as much, general."

"I got the news this morning, while you were attending to your cuirassiers. The army is advancing toward Vienna. I need not tell you to hide your French uniform till you see the tricolor. In fact, it might be as well for you to leave it behind you altogether."

Gabriel shook his head.

"Not that, general. As long as that is with me I can put it on, and I defy them to hang me for a spy. Where I go, that goes with me."

Duroc shrugged his shoulders.

"As you please, captain, so long as you find the numbers of the enemy. Report to his majesty for orders, and tell him I'll manage to keep Prussia out of the coalition till he has trounced Austria and Russia well. You will depart at once?"

"To-night, general," said Gabriel, hesitatingly.

Duroc eyed him keenly.

"If you have a companion on the road, it is the business of no one, you know. Here is money for your wants. Spare nothing, so long as you get the information."

Gabriel bowed and went out. His path was being wonderfully smoothed for him after all. He went to find Casse Tete and told him.

"Casse Tete, I'm going on a journey, and I shall have to leave you behind me."

"Indeed, captain, and you'll do no such thing," said Casse Tete, testily. "Where you go, I go."

"In this case, Casse Tete, it is impossible. I am going through German territory, and I must have none but Germans in my service. I must pass for a Prussian."

"For a Prussian?" echoed Casse Tete. "Oh, my captain, how can you do such a thing? I would as soon be called a louse as a Prussian. It's horrible."

Gabriel smiled.

"I know it. But it must be done, and you will be an obstacle in the way. I am going on secret service."

The old cuirassier's face cleared up.

"Oh, is that all? Ah, my captain, that is what I like, to fool these cursed Prussians. Let me go with you. Any one would take me for a Prussian when I choose to look like it. I can be deaf and dumb, any thing in the world you like, only don't send me back to my company, or the boys will never give me the last about getting the sack from Captain Blancbec—I mean—I mean—"

And Casse Tete turned crimson with confusion at his slip.

As for Gabriel, he only laughed.

"And so they call me Captain Blancbec still do they, Casse Tete? What do they say in the regiment about me, anyway?"

Casse Tete was very much mortified, and he hung down his head as he said:

"They talk all sorts of foolishness, my captain, and the officers have said they will drive you out yet; but as for the men, after the charge at Ulm, they began to like you and swear that Captain Blancbec—there it's out again, I beg your pardon—is a trump in a battle. But the captains. Ah! they are the tough ones. If you go back, you will have to fight them all I fear."

Gabriel smiled.

"Suppose I go back as a major?"

"Ah, that would be different, my captain. Then you would only have to fight the other major, that is Tortue—Delsarte was killed at Ulm, I hear. But it is not true really that they have made you major, my captain?"

"So General Duroc tells me."

"Then that settles it, my officer. Major Lenoir cannot stir a step without his orderly. You can give me any character you like. I

will be deaf and dumb. You can paint me black; but I will go with you."

"Well, Casse Tete," said our hero resignedly, "I suppose it must be so. You will not object to be the French servant of a Prussian count; and in that character you can go with me. Now let us see if you are discreet enough to take a note to the palace of the Prince of Potsdam."

Casse Tete grinned broadly.

"I know the way to the kitchen, major, and I have not neglected my duty to the maids as a Frenchman, you may be sure."

"Then take this note, as soon as I have written it."

A few minutes later Casse Tete was striding away toward the palace of the Princess of Potsdam.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FLIGHT.

THAT night was dark and rainy with a south-west wind blowing, dirty patches of brown cloud flying over a gray, sickly-looking haze, behind which the moon occasionally cast a watery glimpse of herself to make things below more dismal by contrast.

The streets of Berlin were deserted save a few gendarmes who cowered in the doorways and hid themselves in huge cloaks to listen to the splashing of the rain in the puddles.

Nine o'clock was sounding from the towers and steeples of the city when a traveling carriage moved slowly off at a walk past the palace of the old Prince of Potsdam, and a tall man wrapped in a dark cloak got out of it as it moved along and went toward the palace grounds. He looked as if he were waiting for some one, and if so he had not long to wait for as soon as his figure loomed up above the low brick wall that encircled the grounds two black figures stole out through the rain from the servants' wing of the palace, hurried to the outer gate and joined the man in the cloak.

He turned to them as they came and said in a low tone:

"There is no mistake, is there?"

"None," answered one of the women for they were both women—"I am here and this is my maid, Babette."

The man in the cloak bowed, and the three walked up to the carriage which came up to the curb on their approach.

There was a postillion on the leader of the four horses and a tall man on the box who jumped down and opened the door for them.

Then the two women got into the carriage the two tall men climbed upon the box and one of them said in a low tone:

"Forward and drive faster. We must be at the frontier by morning if we can."

The postillion shook his reins and the four horses trotted away out of the city of Berlin taking the direct road south to the frontier of Bohemia.

The two men on the box were Major Lenoir and his orderly, Casse Tete, and they said but little to each other on the way, nestling down into their huge cloaks and bearing the rain in silence till they came to the first post-house on the road.

Here a Prussian gendarme came out with a lantern to examine the passports, and Gabriel exhibited those with which he had been careful to provide himself.

The gendarme looked suspiciously at him.

"This passport says that you are a French officer, but what are you doing on the box? Who is that in the carriage?"

"My sister and her maid: here are their passports."

The gendarme scrutinized them closely and went to the door of the carriage.

"I must compare the descriptions," he said, in the same surly tone.

Gabriel interposed.

"You'll do no such thing. You observe my passport commands every one to help me. I come from the legation at Berlin. Rather than submit a lady to your rudeness I'll turn back and complain of you."

This frightened the gendarme who said:

"I only wish to do my duty, sir."

"Your duty is performed when you sign the passports. You're not required to stare in ladies' faces."

The gendarme growled but submitted.

By the light of his lantern Gabriel looked into the carriage and found Inez very pale and frightened.

"Don't be afraid," he whispered. "No one shall interfere with you."

Then he noticed with some surprise, that both she and her maid were attired in the black robes and coal-scuttle bonnets of nuns.

He said nothing about it and the horses were put to again.

Then they rattled away toward the next station, the way getting more and more lonely and desolate as they advanced.

At the next station they were twenty miles from Berlin and they heard the village clock strike eleven. The gendarme on duty there sleepily countersigned the passports and let them proceed without questions, and at the third station they had even less trouble. At the fourth and fifth stations they found the horses improving in speed and before the day broke Gabriel knew that they were nearing the frontier of Bohemia.

At sunrise they saw before them the dark range of the Erz Gebirge while the spires of a large town shone in the light.

"What is that?" asked Gabriel.

"Dresden, mein herr," said the postillion.

"Then it is time to change passports, and turn Prussian," said Gabriel, to his orderly. "We are in Saxony now, Casse Tete, and you are my French servant."

He called to the postillion to stop and descended to the door of the carriage.

"Will mademoiselle excuse me," he said, "if I enter the carriage for awhile with her? It is necessary to change our passports and I must do that where the postillion cannot see us."

Inez looked pleased.

"But certainly, monsieur, I was surprised that you staid out in the rain all night."

"It was necessary," he answered "for the protection of mademoiselle from any breath of suspicion."

Then after he had entered he told her how she had passed for his sister and how it now became necessary for him to change his character if he expected to be allowed on Austrian territory.

She agreed to all he said and the Alsatian, taking out his false passports proceeded to put in the visas from the true ones as fast as possible by the simple process of tracing and transferring them bodily to the new places.

Not till this was done did he order the postillion to drive on to Dresden and then to take the way to the east by Bautzen to Zittau, where the road enters Bohemia through a pass in the mountains, turning south again.

They changed horses at Dresden without entering the town and here Gabriel assumed the character of Count Schwartz with perfect success, the Saxon officials not detecting his forged signatures and not inspecting them with any closeness.

As they galloped away on the road to Bautzen the cuirassier said to himself:

"Every stage now takes me nearer to danger, but I shall get through for all that."

Tired with his night's ride he tried to converse with his fair neighbor for awhile; but at last weariness overcame him and he began to nod finally falling into a doze in the corner of the carriage—a sad breach of etiquette but when it is remembered that he had not slept for two nights it may be pardoned.

At all events Inez seemed to be able to pardon it for she said softly:

"Hush, Babette! We slept and he watched all last night. He is exhausted and no wonder either."

So Gabriel slumbered peacefully in the corner of the carriage till he was awakened by its stoppage and heard loud voices in a dispute about horses.

He looked out, startled, and found that they were at the post-house, where another carriage had just arrived from the opposite direction while the postmaster was quarreling with the Berlin postillion.

"I tell you that you can only have two, so you must make the best of it. Do you know who is in that carriage over there? A prince, you impudent fellow, a real prince. Do you suppose that I'm going to rob him to please a beggarly Count Schwartz? No, by the head of the emperor. You must get on with two."

Gabriel put his hand on the door and got out, saying to the postmaster:

"What is all this? Are you short of horses?"

The postmaster, when he saw he had to deal with a gentleman, dropped his angry manner and became apologetic.

"It is unfortunate, Herr Graf, but it can't be helped. We have only six horses ready,

and here are two carriages. One must be content with a pair and his Serene Highness the Prince of Potsdam is here and wants four."

Gabriel looked at the postmaster severely.

"What nonsense are you talking?" he said.

"Where is the Prince of Potsdam?"

"In that carriage, mein herr. See if he is not, for yourself."

Gabriel went over to the other carriage and looked in.

The prince, with his right arm in a sling, lay back on the cushions of his carriage, fast asleep and the Frenchman judged from the redness of his face and the way he snored that he had been drinking heavily on the road.

He turned to the postmaster.

"I will take the four horses" he said, "and the prince can have two. He is not in a hurry; I am."

The postmaster looked frightened.

"But, Herr Graf—"

"Do as I tell you," answered Gabriel sternly. "The prince is asleep and knows nothing. I am awake and I am going to have those horses. You'll give him two. I want four."

The postmaster began to expostulate, but the cuirassier cut him short.

The horses were coming out as he spoke and Gabriel sternly ordered the team of four to be put to his carriage while the other team went to the other vehicle.

All the while Gabriel was wondering how in the world the prince came to be on that road entering Saxony, when he had left him three days before near Munich about four hundred miles off by the roads.

The horses were put to before he had settled the point to his own satisfaction and he was about to leave it to time for solution, when the Prince of Potsdam snorted and sneezed and opened his eyes.

The moment they rested on Gabriel's face the Prussian started up as if terrified and cried out:

"Good heavens! how came you here?"

Gabriel put his head in at the window.

"Be calm," he said quietly. "You know what you got before for fighting me. Keep your own counsel and go your own way, or I swear to you that I will kill you now."

The prince was deadly pale.

"I want nothing to do with you," he said in a faltering voice. "I will do as you say."

"See that you do," was the stern answer.

Then Gabriel went to his own carriage, gave a signal to his postillion and the horses galloped away full speed toward Zittau.

As soon as the sound died away, the prince came out of his carriage and said to the postmaster:

"Who was that?"

"It was the Herr Graf von Schwartz," said the postmaster uneasily, for he began to fear another scolding.

"He was no such thing," answered the prince viciously. "He is a French spy. Quick, send a courier to the nearest post of soldiers and tell them a French spy is on Austrian territory. The emperor will give ten thousand thalers for him."

The postmaster stared as if petrified and then ran to the door of the house.

"Hi, Hans, Fritz, Yakop," he yelled. "Come down and run to the fields. Get horses and run like the devil to the next station. No, I'll go myself. Catch me a horse. Will you not go too, Herr Prince?"

"If you can get horses, yes."

And in a short time the boys were chasing out of the pasture a number of horses, one of which was taken by the prince the other by the postmaster.

Then the Prussian took from his carriage a pair of pistols, put them in his pocket, mounted and galloped away.

Now, Gabriel Lenoir, see you drive fast, for the worst of all foes a malignant coward is after you to rouse the country on the French spy.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PRISONER.

At noon that day, a traveling carriage, with four smoking horses, drew up at the post-house of the little village of Zittau, inside the Austrian frontier.

The moment it arrived, thirty or forty men in uniform, who had been hidden in the post-house, rushed out, surrounded the carriage and began to cock their rifles, for they were Tyrolese Yagers—while an officer stepped to the door of the vehicle, and called out sternly:

"Surrender, sir. You are my prisoner."

A tall dark man on the box, with a long strip of plaster down one cheek, uttered a fierce French oath, and whipped out a pistol as long as a small carbine, but a quiet voice inside said clearly:

"Be still, Casse Tete. It is all right."

Then Gabriel Lenoir looked out saying:

"What is the trouble Herr Officer? What have I done to be arrested for?"

"You are a French officer in disguise," was the instant answer.

Gabriel threw back his cloak and displayed to the astonished Tyrolese, the full cuirassier uniform of France.

"I am not in disguise," he answered. "If I am a prisoner, I am a prisoner of war."

"Very well," said the Tyrolese officer, in a more mollified tone. "You are a prisoner anyway; so get out."

Then he turned to the house and called:

"Here, Herr Prince, we have got him. See if it be your man."

Gabriel descended slowly from the vehicle, just as the Prince of Potsdam, followed by the postmaster of the inn where they had met that morning, stepped out.

The moment the prince saw him he cried:

"Disarm him. He is dangerous. He is a spy I tell you."

The Austrian hesitated.

"An officer in full uniform is no spy, but he should be disarmed. Give up your sword, sir, at once."

Gabriel complied quietly; for he saw that resistance was useless.

Then the Prussian prince came up and said fiercely:

"I denounce that man as a spy. He has in his pocket a false passport. His name is Lenoir, and he calls himself, in the passport, Schwartz. Search him and see."

"On the contrary," replied Gabriel calmly.

"I am Major Lenoir of the Death's Head Cuirassiers, and here is my passport as such."

He pulled out his original passport, and the Austrian took it with a puzzled air.

"This is all regular," he said. "I am sorry to have to take you prisoner, monsieur; but you must be aware that your visit here in full uniform was madness."

Then, to the Prussian, he said coldly:

"You see, the gentleman is not a spy. He is only a dare-devil."

But the prince, now that he ran no danger, was full of eagerness to punish his rival.

"I tell you he has another passport," he said.

"The postmaster countersigned it. Here, let me look at that one."

He glanced over it rapidly, and then his countenance fell. He had expected to find it deficient in signatures. Instead of that, it was regularly countersigned all the way to Zittau, to which place he and the postmaster had ridden across country by a short cut to intercept Gabriel.

The cuirassier eyed him with a smile of scorn and said in French:

"You are a contemptible coward, and I will cut off your ears when next we meet."

The prince squared himself defiantly.

"You are a liar and a spy. I will have you hung at once, to save time."

Then to the Austrian he continued:

"There is some trick here. It is impossible that they can have countersigned a French officer's passport on your territory. There is another somewhere. Search the carriage."

The Austrian went to the door, and then seemed to be surprised and embarrassed, for he bowed low and said:

"I am sorry, ladies; but my duty compels me to do this. Please descend."

The Prince of Potsdam uttered a cry of amazement as he saw two black nuns descend from the carriage both with their long veils down.

"Who are these?" he asked.

Gabriel stepped forward.

"Ladies under my protection, who must not be insulted."

To the Austrian officer he said:

"Captain, your orders do not extend to the insult of ladies. I admit I am a fool to be caught here, but I had engaged to take these holy sisters to the convent of Our Lady at the village of Austerlitz. If I am taken, at least let them proceed on their way."

The Austrian bowed respectfully.

"Certainly, monsieur. But who are they?"

"Here are their passport. My sister, and her friend, Sister Babette."

The Austrian look at the passports.

"They seem to be correct," he said slowly; "but, seeing the position in which I find you, I regret to be compelled to insist on seeing their faces. This may be a trick. They may be your comrades in disguise."

Gabriel's heart gave a thump. He would not have minded Inez unavailing, but for the presence of Prince Ferdinand. He knew that Inez had safe in her bosom the false passport with the true signatures, which he had copied on the way, and he hardly knew what to do.

"I beg of you, sir, as a brother officer," he said, in a low tone, "not to insist on this. I give you the honor of a French soldier that these are not disguised men, but ladies of rank."

"I am sorry," returned the Austrian, "but my duty is clear. The ladies *must* unvail, and I must judge for myself."

Inez came forward, and said in a low tone to Gabriel:

"It is enough, monsieur. You have done more than your duty already."

She turned to the Austrian officer with a swift motion, dropped her vail and looked him in the face, turning her back on Ferdinand with true feminine dexterity.

The Austrian bowed low.

"I am satisfied, mademoiselle," he said.

Inez covered her face as swiftly as before, and brought her maid forward to repeat the operation, when Prince Ferdinand, with a sudden twitch, caught the end of her vail and dragged it down, crying:

"Treason, treason, captain! He has been trying to carry off my wife."

In that instant Gabriel, losing control of himself at the sight of his rival, rushed at the Prussian, seized him by the throat and shook him savagely.

Ferdinand struggled, the Austrian soldiers rushed in and dragged them apart, the Prussian prince, foaming with rage born of jealousy at the discovery he had made, and roaring:

"I tell you he's a spy, and is trying to steal my wife. That is my wife, I tell you!"

Gabriel stood panting and glaring at his foe with grim contempt.

"Ah! you are a coward," he said. "You only dare make war on women."

To the Austrian he said:

"I apologize for my violence, monsieur. I am your prisoner, but I trust to your honor to allow these ladies to depart."

But the Austrian officer was puzzled, and did not know what to do.

Finally he announced his decision.

"You two in French uniform will be sent on to Koniggratz. If the ladies wish to proceed they can do so. As for the Prince of Potsdam, he says this lady is his wife. Let her decide."

To Inez he said:

"Madame, this gentleman says he is your husband. Is it true?"

Inez, her eyes flashing, answered:

"No. Do you not see whither I am bound? Let me proceed on my journey. This man is the object of my deepest loathing."

The Austrian turned to the prince.

"You see, monsieur, the lady denies you. The soldiers of the emperor are not paid to settle disputes between married couples. The lady is at liberty to take her departure."

Inez turned away with a glance of triumph in her dark eyes. The blood of this hitherto gentle, quiet girl was up at last.

As she passed by Gabriel, who stood among the Austrian soldiers, a prisoner, she said to him in French:

"I shall not forget what you have done for me to-day. God bless you!"

She stepped into the carriage, and said to the Austrian officer:

"Please tell them to drive on to the road that leads to the Convent of Our Lady of Austerlitz."

A few moments later the two cuirassiers, helpless prisoners in the midst of the yagers, saw the carriage drive away, and Gabriel felt his heart sink as he thought:

"She has deserted me."

Then the Austrian officer came to him.

"If you will give your parole for yourself and your servant, you may go on to Koniggratz with only a guard. I feel sorry for you, monsieur. I have been in scrapes myself for a pair of dark eyes. I don't want to be harsh to you."

Gabriel bowed with gratitude, but replied:

"I thank you much for your kindness, but I must inform you that I cannot give my parole. I intend to escape if I see a fair chance."

The Austrian shrugged his shoulders.

"As you please. I wanted to be kind to you, but if you will not accept the kindness, why you must take prisoner's fare. The two emperors at Koniggratz will be able to dispose of your case."

Gabriel looked surprised.

"The two emperors?"

"Yes. Didn't you know the czar has come down to help our emperor? Ah, but we shall give your Napoleon a fine return for his Ulm tricks. He beat us there; but we'll give him his dose before the walls of Vienna."

And Gabriel thought to himself:

"So I am finding out something, even as a prisoner."

CHAPTER XIV.

INEZ.

In the eastern corner of the Austrian province of Moravia, near the border of Hungary, the country is rough, hilly and heavily wooded.

The great Carpathian Range with its spurs and offshoots, the Erz Gebirge, the Riesen and Fichtel Gebirge and a maze of small streams, marshes and rivers, make it difficult for an army to move rapidly, and the roads are few.

In the midst of this country lies the town of Brunn, the capital of Moravia, and from Brunn runs a road to the east, crossing the little rivulet of Goldbach, and forking at Possoritz. One branch of this fork goes to Olmutz, forty-five miles to the north, the other stretches to the south-east toward Hungary, by way of Goding, and passes within a mile or so, the little village of Austerlitz, soon to be made so famous.

Two days after the capture of Gabriel Lenoir at Zittau, a carriage passed by Possoritz on the way to Austerlitz, and drove up to the gate of the Convent of Our Lady of Austerlitz, where the postillion was halted by an Austrian soldier on duty before the gate, who said:

"What do you want? The nuns are all gone to Vienna. Didn't you know it?"

The postillion scratched his head.

"No, I didn't. Why, we've had ever so much trouble to get here. And now you say we have to go on to Vienna?"

"Certainly, if you want to see the nuns. I suppose you have some in the carriage?"

The postillion nodded, and at that moment a lady put her head out of the window and asked in agitated tones:

"What! Have they gone?"

"Yes, gracious fraulein. To Vienna."

She seemed to be much distressed.

"We must go on then. Oh, what shall we do? How came they to go to Vienna?"

The sentry answered civilly enough:

"So please the gracious fraulein, the country is full of soldiers and the abbess thought it best to take ladies where it was safer."

"Go on then, to Vienna," said the lady in a tone of resignation. "Oh, is it possible I shall never be at peace?"

The sentry said nothing. It was not his business to do anything but answer questions and guard the convent gate.

"What a fool is such a young and pretty creature to go into a convent."

Then he resumed his tramp.

Meantime the carriage drove on for some miles. The postillion knew that he could easily reach Vienna before night if the horses on the road had not been taken for army use, and he did not care much for the extra ride.

But the lady in the carriage, who was none other than Inez de Real, accompanied by her maid Babette, was desolated at the disappointment and loneliness that confronted her. As they rattled on with much creaking and jolting, she could only weep for fear of what might come to her, while Babette, seeing her mistress frightened, wept to keep her company.

So matters rested for an hour or more, when both women started violently at the sound of a sullen distant boom on the road ahead of them.

Babette shrieked:

"Oh, mademoiselle, they are fighting again. What shall we do?"

"I don't know, Babette. We can only trust in Heaven," replied poor Inez. "Perhaps I did wrong ever to leave Berlin, but I could not stay there."

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

More guns far away, and the carriage began to slacken its pace, while the postillion called out:

"Soldiers, gracious fraulein, coming this way at a gallop. Shall we turn back?"

"No," answered Inez, more calmly; "they cannot injure us surely. Go on as if nothing had happened."

The carriage rattled on again, and in a short time the women heard the clatter of cavalry coming toward them.

Presently a single hussar, covered with dust, his face all bloody from a wound, galloped by without noticing them, and soon after several others passed in the same manner.

Their horses were white with foam and dust, and could hardly muster up a gallop. They looked as if they had been worked hard lately.

Soon after this came the rapid patter of a volley ahead, followed by the dash of a considerable body of men coming down at a gallop, and Inez saw an officer of Austrian hussars by her window. He seemed to be excited.

"Gracious heavens, ladies, what are you doing here?" he cried. "Turn back, or you will be killed or worse. The French have taken Vienna, and we are falling back. Their cavalry advance is just over the hill, in force. Turn back and gallop as hard as you can."

Even while he was speaking came the crackling of fire-arms at a distance, and crash came a bullet through the carriage, while the postillion uttered a cry of fear.

The hussar officer looked round.

"Get out of the carriage," he cried. "We will take you back. They've killed one of the horses. Here, quick, get up behind me. There is no time to lose."

Indeed there was not.

At that very moment came a loud shout on the road ahead, and the Austrians broke and fled, deserting their officer, who shouted to them in vain to stop.

But when he saw that the French horsemen were advancing at a sharp trot, firing carbines as they came, even he thought flight advisable, so the end of the matter was that Inez found herself sitting in her carriage, with one of the lead horses dead in its harness, while through the front window she could see a body of French dragoons trotting rapidly up.

In a few minutes they were all round the carriage, and she heard a hoarse voice shouting out in commanding tones:

"Forward, my lambs! forward! Drive them over the top of the hill and halt there."

Then they went on, and she saw a French officer come to the door.

He looked in and saluted politely.

"Sorry to have troubled you, ladies, but who are you and where are you going?"

Inez felt a thrill of relief at the sound of the familiar French tongue, and had already made up her mind to surrender to her own people at the risk of the anger of the emperor.

"Oh, monsieur," she said. "I am glad to be under French protection once more. I am Mademoiselle de Real, maid of honor to her majesty the Empress Josephine. In Heaven's name, monsieur, tell me, where are the emperor's quarters?"

The dragoon seemed to be amazed beyond belief; but he answered:

"His majesty is in the Imperial Palace at Vienna. If you desire I will send you there with an escort, but it will be best to do it through Marshal Murat, who has charge of the advance."

"Anything, anyway, so long as I am out of this fighting," cried Inez, earnestly. "Oh, monsieur, I have had a terrible trial since I escaped from Berlin."

The dragoon seemed more and more puzzled.

"From Berlin! And you are a maid of honor to her majesty? Excuse me, mademoiselle, but it becomes my duty to send you to the marshal under guard."

He evidently mistrusted her story and took her for a spy, but Inez knew nothing of what were his thoughts, and felt a great deal of relief when he went away and she found herself once more proceeding on the road to Vienna, more slowly now, for she had only a pair instead of four horses to draw the carriage.

Her one consolation was that she had got rid of the Prince of Potsdam, that individual having left her at Zittau, for what reason she knew not, though she was much relieved at his absence.

She had expected him to follow, claim her, and carry her back to Berlin by force, and his failure to do so was an agreeable surprise.

Therefore, as she rolled along on the road to Vienna, she was rehearsing in her mind all sorts of pleas to be made to the emperor to induce him to relent from his purpose of marrying her to the hateful prince. She did not know that in such matters the Corsican Man of Destiny was pitiless.

After two or three hours' travel the carriage with its escort of a dozen dragoons stopped at a post-house, which was quite surrounded by the bivouac of several regiments of cuirassiers and here Inez was compelled to wait for nearly a quarter of an hour when a cuirassier officer came bareheaded to the door and said:

"Mademoiselle will please descend. The marshal wishes to see her."

"What marshal?" asked she nervously.

"Marshal Murat."

Frightened at the idea of facing so many soldiers she hesitated, when the officer seeing her confusion, called out:

"All you men fall back and look the other way. Have you no manners?"

Then he offered his arm to Inez who got out of the carriage, trembling excessively, and was led into the post-house, followed closely by Babette, who clung to her mistress in evident terror.

The post-house proved to be a large inn and the officer conducted his charges to a room up-stairs where they found Marshal Murat, before a table covered with maps and papers dictating to an officer, who was writing rapidly.

The marshal's handsome face looked brown and thin from hard work and he had a vexed worried look about him that Inez noted as very different from the jovial aspect he had been wont to wear in the salons of Paris.

He went on dictating without noticing her.

"The advance will feel the enemy as closely as possible, compatible without serious loss and push on to Olmutz if they do not find the enemy in force. It is important to find just how many men the Russians have, and where they are posted."

"There," he added, hastily scrawling his big "Joachim Murat" at the bottom of the sheet. "Send that to Lasalle at once. It's strange we've not struck them yet, very strange."

He turned round on the girls and looked closely at the two shrouded figures. Then he rose and bowed formally.

"I ask pardon of the holy ladies. I was told that Mademoiselle de Real was here."

"And so she is, Monsieur le Marechal," said Inez, throwing back her long veil and stepping forward. "Do you not recognize me?"

Murat looked at her steadily. He was the brother-in-law of Napoleon, and his wife in common with all the Bonapartes, hated Josephine intensely. The gallant and handsome marshal, who was at home the most abject of henpecked husbands, took his cue from his imperious wife.

He knew Inez well enough as a favorite of the empress, and was astounded to find her here, but he wished to give her a lesson that her mistress's protection would not avail her much with him.

"So, mademoiselle," he said sarcastically, "I was not aware that her majesty's maids of honor were in the habit of going on masquerading trips in the enemy's lines. May I ask how you came here?"

"No," said Inez boldly. "You may not. I am responsible to the emperor and my mistress alone. You will please to send me on to his majesty's head-quarters at once. I have news of importance to tell him."

Murat pulled his whiskers thoughtfully.

"News of importance. If so, you can tell it to me. I command the advance."

Inez could not help smiling.

"I am none of your soldiers, monsieur. I wish to see his majesty to ask him to send me back to Paris."

Murat looked more astonished than before.

"To Paris! Why, whence have you come?"

"From Berlin, monsieur."

He started and asked eagerly:

"From Berlin? Do you know Lenoir the *attache* to the legation? He was to meet us here. Have you seen him?"

"He is a prisoner in the hands of the enemy," replied Inez, coloring deeply, "and if he be not saved by the emperor he will be executed as a spy."

Murat seemed to be struck by her news, for he repeated, slowly:

"A prisoner? Ah, that accounts for it. I was wondering we had not met him yet. Mademoiselle, you are at liberty to go. I will send an officer with you to take you to his majesty at Vienna."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ESCAPE.

GABRIEL LENOIR and Casse Tete, in a jolting farm-wagon on bundles of straw, with a guard of a dozen yagers round them, jogged sleepily along over the road from Zittau to Koniggratz, through scrubby pine woods up and down rugged hills, with the Carpathians forever in sight on either hand.

Both had taken off their cuirasses while neither had any offensive arms, and it was the last thing of which any of the escort dreamed that they would attempt to escape.

They had passed pickets of hussars and cuirassiers on the way with a few of the wild, scrubby-looking Cossacks; but had met no infantry except Austrians in small numbers.

When they got to the hills by Koniggratz, however, the scene changed for they came in sight of a stretch of country about ten miles by five dotted all over with the smoke of bivouac fires and the glitter of arms' stacks.

The two men in the wagon were half-lying, half-sitting upon the straw with their eyes closed, seemingly asleep, but as the wagon halted to breathe the horses Casse Tete yawned and looked out, while Gabriel Lenoir cast a rapid glance over all the scene.

The Austrian yagers, sturdy little men of short stature, with rifles that had such short, heavy barrels they looked like carbines, paused on the top of the hill to wipe their foreheads and chat.

"There is another wood just beyond, my major," muttered Casse Tete, under his grizzled mustache. "Shall we do it there or wait?"

"Now's the time," answered Gabriel, in the same furtive tone.

Then he stretched himself and said aloud to the sub-lieutenant of the yagers:

"Quite an army you have there. Are they all Austrians?"

"No, monsieur," said the other, civilly, "these are all Russians here. You can see the head-quarters over toward the Olmutz road. The czar himself is there with at least eighty thousand men."

"Who is their general?" asked Gabriel, in a tone of indifference.

"His name, I believe, is Kutusoff," answered the guileless Austrian, "but they have a Doctoroff and a Soltakoff and a whole army of fellows ending in off. And the whole of the Russian Imperial Guards is there, too."

"How many of them are there?" asked Gabriel.

"I don't know. About three thousand I should say. Come, we must be moving."

The wagon creaked along and descended slowly into a muddy, narrow road between high banks where the horses went up to their knees at every step, while the yagers strung out into single file, picking out the hardest places and not thinking of their prisoners.

Thus they rattled and splashed along for near a mile till they entered a wood of scrubby pines, when the road became worse than ever, the soil being here composed of black loam, while the infantry soldiers had scattered themselves in all directions jumping from root to root of the trees.

It was here that, all of a sudden Gabriel and Casse Tete rose stealthily to their feet behind the driver, who sat on the box beside one of the yagers.

There was a dull crashing sound as the scarred cuirassier clutched the heads of both men in his formidable gripe and brought them together with all his force.

Neither man uttered a cry, but both dropped back into the cart without a struggle, when Casse Tete deliberately took the reins and drove on.

All the rest of the escort was in front, and not one turned his head, so quietly and neatly was the whole thing done.

Then Casse Tete urged on his team a little further, and finally dropped the reins, leaving the horses to themselves.

The consequence was that the animals floundered on a few paces and then stopped of their own accord, for it required considerable urging to get them forward at all on such a road.

As soon as this took place, Casse Tete took

off the belt of the yager whose skull he had fractured against that of the driver, and picked up his rifle.

"Now, my officer," he said, "our way is clear for a little, unless they come back. In that case I'll have to give them a shot. I wish we had another of the rifles."

Gabriel scanned the retreating forms of the yagers ahead, and saw that no time was to be lost. At any moment one of them might look back.

He and Casse Tete sprang from the wagon and plunged into the forest, where as soon as they left the road they found the walking comparatively good while the thick foliage of the scrub fir trees hid them from sight in a very few minutes from the road.

As soon as they found this, they struck off to the edge of the woods into the most broken ground they could find, selected a hiding place among some rocks on a hillside, from whence they could see the plain below, and lay in wait for the sun to go down.

They knew well that in their French dress they would be recognized half a mile off in the daytime, and that night offered them the only chance they had of escape if they were not tracked to their hiding-place in the mean time.

It was not long before they heard a rifle-shot in the wood and shouting.

"They are after us, my officer," said Casse Tete, and he began to look at the priming of his rifle.

They listened and heard the yagers calling to one another, their voices showing that they had scattered over the wood to hunt.

Their hiding-place had been chosen at a place where the pine wood crept over the brow of a hill, and they were entirely sheltered from view above by an overhanging rock, while a ledge of the same rock stretched out right and left for some half a mile.

Below them, over the tops of the fir trees they could see the whole Russian camp, and busied themselves in counting the fires and estimating the force of the enemy.

They both agreed that there must be at least eighty thousand men on the plain below.

Presently Casse Tete whispered:

"They are coming this way. I hear them."

Both fugitives crouched down under the hanging rock, and listened.

There were voices above them.

"They've gone on toward the Olmutz road," said some one in German. "It's no use our searching here any further. We'll give the alarm to the cavalry pickets. They'll catch them. Two men cannot run the lines of a whole army."

Then they heard voices and steps receding, and Casse Tete whispered:

"What did they say, my officer?"

Gabriel told him in French, and the cuirassier observed, dryly:

"That remains to be seen. Wait till night, and we'll show them what two French cuirassiers can do in a ticklish position."

They remained where they were for some hours, watching the plain below, and at last saw a column of cavalry moving out from among the fires, taking the road to the south that ran through the camp.

The sun shone on the column as it went, and they perceived that it was largely made up of cuirassiers.

"That means a forward movement," thought Gabriel. "Cuirassiers are not sent out on picket duty. That army is about to move in full force."

He watched the gleaming column as it wound off to the south like a serpent with shining scales, and Casse Tete uttered a sigh.

"What's the matter, Casse Tete?" asked Lenoir.

"Ah, my officer," said the cuirassier, "it is seeing those fellows below. It reminds me of the old Death's Heads. Shall we ever ride in their squadrons again? Ah, what fun it would be if we had them here now, to pitch into those fellows down there. How we could crack them over the head!"

"Patience, Casse Tete," said our hero unable to prevent smiling, "we shall have all the fighting we want before we have done, or I am much mistaken. Look, yonder goes a battery with the column. Do you see the yellow guns?"

"Certainly, my officer. But what are those wagons doing yonder?"

"What wagons?"

Casse Tete pointed to where they could just see, over the tops of the bushes at the edge

of the mountain, the white tilts of a long line of wagons crawling out.

They watched them in silence till they had been defiling for half an hour, and then Gabriel came to the conclusion that the whole Russian train must be in motion toward Olmutz.

He had no map with him; but he had studied the country beforehand, and he knew that the road he saw must be that toward Olmutz.

"And beyond that," he thought, "is Austerlitz where she has gone. I wonder if she is safe within the convent walls, or if he has caught her again. I shall have to kill that man some day."

They remained hidden behind the trees until the sun went down, when the chill November fog began to creep up the side of the mountain, and under its cover they stole down into the plain below, without meeting a soul.

They could see through the fog the red glare of the bivouac fires, and made straight for the high road.

Their long watch on the mountain side had shown them that the camp was full of stragglers, wandering to and fro, and they both agreed that boldness offered them the best chance.

They were inside the pickets of a great army, and as long as night hid them, they could wander where they would.

They had left their cuirasses behind in the farm-wagon as too cumbersome; but their helmets were still as conspicuous as ever, so they kept away from the fires and confined themselves to following the highway, where they met no one, though a train of wagons was passing over it.

But the wagoners were sleepy and sullen, and no one noticed the two men in the mud, till Casse Tete suddenly pulled his officer's sleeve, and whispered:

"Listen. Cavalry coming."

They passed to the roadside where a clump of trees loomed up and hid themselves at the foot of two of the trees, when the heavy, clanking trot of cavalry was heard, and presently a dense column of men went by at a jog, passing the train.

They could see the outlines of helmets against the fog, but the riders were shrouded in long brown cloaks, and only the peculiar clank of armor told that cuirassiers were passing again.

They waited under the trees for a good half-hour, and still the horsemen kept on at a fast walk or a slow trot, till Gabriel estimated some three thousand men had passed, when the rumble of artillery became audible, and the column was closed, as had been that of the afternoon, by a battery of guns.

As the last figure disappeared in the fog, Gabriel said to Casse Tete:

"Now, my comrade, is the time for work. We must follow that column, kill two men and take their horses; then make use of the night to ride on. Dare you follow?"

Casse Tete saluted.

"Where my officer goes I am always ready to follow; but if my officer will take advice, he will stay under this tree for a few minutes more."

"Why?"

"Simply because there are stragglers in the rear still. These Russians, I hear, are devils to drink and—hark!"

"Click! clack! click! clack! click! clack!"

A horseman was coming up through the fog from the rear, after the column, at a rapid trot, and presently he loomed up in sight, a tall cuirassier on a big horse, that was snorting as if it had been going rapidly.

He pulled up by the tree, catching sight of the helmets, and called out something in Russian that neither understood.

He spoke in a jesting tone, and walked his horse toward them, holding out something in his hand.

As neither answered, he came up close and they saw that he was proffering them a bottle, while he reeled to and fro in his saddle, and was evidently drunk.

Mumbling something, Gabriel held out his hand for the bottle, and at the same time got close to the horseman's stirrup.

Suspecting nothing, the drunken Russian, who was the soul of good-nature in his cups, took a drink out of his bottle and handed it to Gabriel.

In the same moment the Frenchman seized his wrist and pulled him, while Casse Tete, on the other side, lifted his foot bodily from the stirrup.

The result was that the Russian tumbled off his horse on the top of his head, and lay still in the mud.

Then muttered Casse Tete:

"We've got him, your honor. Hold the horse a moment, and I'll make him safe."

Not knowing what he meant, Gabriel seized the bridle, then saw Casse Tete take off the man's helmet, and deliberately strike him on the back of the head with the clubbed rifle of the yager he had killed.

"There is one man safe, your honor," he said, coolly. "Now, if we wait, we shall have another before long. He'll see the horse and think we're all getting drunk under this tree."

They took the arms and armor of the dead or stunned cuirassier, which Casse Tete assumed in obedience to Gabriel's order.

Then they waited for more victims.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE MIDST OF THE FOG.

THEY had not long to wait. As Casse Tete had foreseen, before very long they heard more horses trotting to catch up with the column, and two men dashed by them, riding fast along the train, and not noticing the group under the tree by the roadside.

"What does that mean?" said Gabriel.

"It means, my officer, that the provost guard is after them, and they've no time to stop," said Casse Tete, rather anxiously.

"We'd better move back or they'll all see us."

Realizing the danger in which they would be if anything like a party came by them, Gabriel followed the advice, and they led the captured horse back into the fog, till the road was invisible.

Then they soon heard the clank of armor and heard a party trot smartly by; the stern tones of an officer calling out orders every now and then.

These passed out of hearing, and Casse Tete said, in a tone of relief:

"That was the provost guard, I think."

"Then there will be no more stragglers," quoth Gabriel innocently.

Casse Tete laughed slightly.

"Pardon me, my officer, but you officers are too apt to think you frighten men with provost guards, when the sharp ones only laugh at them. You'll find more stragglers yet, and they'll be the drunkest of all. See if I'm not right. Moreover, if I don't get the best horse in that cuirassier regiment I shall be surprised. There is always some officer's servant in the rear with his master's charger, and he's sure to be a drunken vagabond. Hark! here comes some one now."

They heard the loud voices of drunken men talking recklessly away, and presently two riders loomed up in the fog, with a led horse on one side.

One of these riders was a cuirassier, the other a short fat man, who seemed to be bare-headed and very drunk indeed, from the way he swayed about in his saddle.

"Now, my officer," whispered Casse Tete, "show them the bottle."

Gabriel advanced from the tree under which they were lurking, and held up the bottle calling out in a hissing whisper:

"Sh! Sh!"

The two men instantly became silent and pulled up their horses, when Gabriel pretended to drink and waved the bottle. The effect was magical.

The cuirassier dashed up to the tree and was off his horse in a moment, though he was so drunk that he nearly fell on his nose in doing so, while the fat man, in following his example measured his length on the ground and lay there.

There was no time to lose.

As the cuirassier stumbled, Casse Tete caught the horse-hair of his helmet, jerked him on his back half choked, and in one instant stabbed him in the throat with the long-sword he had stolen.

Gabriel, in the same instant, gave the fat man a kick on the back of the head that knocked him senseless, and said to Casse Tete:

"They're finished. Catch the horses."

This was done with very little trouble, when our two French cuirassiers found themselves in possession of four horses, of which one was evidently an officer's charger, a grand bay dappled with black, with a heavy mane and tail and a neck and chest like a draught horse, though his sloping shoulders and clean legs betokened speed.

Gabriel had no hesitation in choosing this grand horse and speedily saddled it with the trappings of the dead cuirassier, whose weapons he took.

Then our two adventurers mounted, and rode off through the fog and night, in full French uniform, with the skull and cross-bones of the Death's Heads on their helmets, but mounted on Russian horses and armed with Russian weapons.

"My faith, major," observed Casse Tete presently, "that horse of yours is a fine stepper! He trots so easily and yet he keeps my horse at a canter."

Casse Tete did not know that the stolen charger was one of a breed that was to become famous in after years as the grandest heavy trotting stock in the world, under the name of the "Orloff trotters."

Gabriel without knowing it had stumbled on one of the earliest specimens of this fine breed in the dark.

Very soon as they trotted along they heard the column of cavalry ahead of them and Gabriel said to Casse Tete:

"Comrade, what do you advise?"

He had become used already to relying on the sharp wits of the old Gascon.

Casse Tete was by no means slow to give his advice for he felt flattered.

"I should say, my officer, that we keep on where we are, near the rear of this column, so that we can pass the pickets with them without questioning."

"But suppose some one comes back from the column, missing this horse that I am riding, what shall we do?"

Casse Tete seemed puzzled.

"Indeed I could not say, major."

Gabriel reined up.

"Let them pass on then. We can run the guard easy enough going out of the lines, but if we are too near that regiment we shall be pursued and the slowest horse in such a race would be yours."

They diverged after this into a muddy field where their horses sunk over the fetlocks, and could hear in advance the loud splashing and trampling which told that the cavalry column was doing the same thing.

Their position was one full of excitement, for they did not know at what moment they might come on some one who would challenge them in Russian, and they were quite uncertain in the dark, as soon as they left the road, of the direction in which they ought to proceed.

They were in the midst of the Russian army, but how near to the outposts they knew not, and they could only follow at a distance the noise of the column of cavalry ahead.

They could hear the rumble of the wagons and see glimpses of the long train of white tilts moving slowly through the fog, which was pervaded by a reddish glare from the innumerable camp fires around.

This glare was, however, so general that it only increased the confusion under which they labored, both having lost all notions of points of the compass, and finding it necessary to keep the road in sight if they hoped to escape being lost.

Guided only by the rumble of wagons and trampling of the column ahead, they moved on, till all of a sudden they saw a broad red glare before them, and could distinguish stacks of arms and crowds of men on foot standing before fires.

They had run unawares on an infantry camp, and it behooved them to escape any close questioning.

So they rode up close to the train again, regardless of danger in that quarter, and slowly passed by the quarters of a large brigade of Russian infantry.

They could see the men standing in groups by the fires looking at the passing trains and heard several voices call out to them in Russian in a bantering tone.

"They take us for stragglers," said Casse Tete, in a low tone. "They won't expect us to answer them. So much the better."

In fact, they succeeded in passing the camp of the infantry without exciting suspicion, and soon after saw that the fog ahead of them was dark, while the red glare was behind them.

Then they knew they had passed the thick camp-fires at last.

In a little while the wagons on the road came to a halt and the trampling and splashing of the horsemen in front ceased.

"They have halted, my officer," whispered Casse Tete. "Now comes the danger. They will close up the column soon."

Gabriel knew what he meant.

In a march on a narrow, muddy road a long column gets very much strung out with stragglers, making it necessary to halt and close up, and on these occasions the officers hurry up the rear divisions with much scolding.

Presently they could hear far in advance hoarse voices, shouting Russian orders with a great deal of clank and clatter as the different squadrons trotted to close up.

Gabriel and Casse Tete soon after heard some one trotting back along the train, and Lenoir turned his horse into the fields away from the road, followed by Casse Tete. It was necessary no one should see them if possible.

As they turned away two of the wagoners called out to them in Russian, and they saw that they were still taken for stragglers trying to sneak out of the ranks.

They had got fairly out of sight in the fog at last, when they heard a loud voice on the road scolding violently, and the two wagoners were answering.

Casse Tete quietly drew his sword.

"We have got to fight for it now, my officer," he said. "That may be the Provost Marshal himself."

Presently the scolding stopped and they heard the splashing and panting of a horse coming toward them through the soft mud.

Gabriel and Casse Tete urged their own horses away and found the ground was getting softer and softer.

Presently Gabriel's horse nearly ran into a tree and then sunk up to his belly in a water-hole.

"We have got to a marsh," said our hero in a low voice. "Turn and fight."

He scrambled out and the two stood there in the midst of the damp fog at the edge of some swamp, while they could distinguish the outline of a horseman plunging through the weeds toward them.

This horseman seemed to see them for he shouted out menacingly to them in Russian something they did not understand though they judged it as a command to come back to the ranks.

Gabriel and Casse Tete walked their horses slowly forward to meet the new-comer who presently came plunging up on a big black horse that seemed to have splendid trotting action.

He came tearing up to them and they saw in the fog and darkness the face of an officer with a light mustache.

He seemed to be furious with passion as he came up and rode straight at Gabriel whom he struck a violent blow with his clenched fist as he arrived beside him, cursing in Russian, as he did so.

In that very instant Casse Tete drove the point of his long sword into the other's body, running him through the arm-hole of his cuirass and the Russian uttered a shout of pain threw up his arms and fell from the saddle.

"Take his horse, Casse Tete," whispered Lenoir eagerly. "It's better than your own. Then follow me."

Without hesitation, the Gascon brought his horse beside the black and swung himself out of one saddle into the other in a couple of seconds.

Then they turned toward the road, for Gabriel had made up his mind to a bold dash. He had seen as the Russian officer approached that he was mounted on a horse of the same breed as his own stolen charger and he felt that with Casse Tete on such an animal they were both better mounted than any man in the column except a few officers. Over the common troop horses their superiority was marked.

Without any hesitation they dashed off through the mud at a rapid slashing trot, a gait to which their animals seemed to be peculiarly fitted; and in a few short minutes had come up to the halted column of artillery and cavalry.

As they trotted boldly past the flank of the column, they saw the men turn their heads to look; but none said a word. They were evidently taken for two officers going to the head of the column to see the colonel.

They found the men sitting on their horses patiently, lighting pipes, singing or chatting to pass the time and waiting for the order to close up.

After a little they came to a gap in the

road where it was open and dashed out into it for they heard the clatter of another squadron closing up in front.

As they did so, an officer at the head of the last squadron yelled out an order and the whole squadron came clattering after them. Then they found themselves on the highroad with Russian troops in front and behind them all trotting away for dear life.

Not for long though.

Inside of a quarter of a mile they caught up with the squadron ahead and then dashed round by the flank pushing still for the head of the column.

No one had suspected them yet.

On they went, convinced at every step that their horses were better than any other in the regiment they were passing so easily, and at last saw that they had come to the head of the regiment. Yes there was no mistaking it now. The first squadron was marching forward at a slashing walk, with a little group of officers ahead, and the solitary figure of the colonel in front.

"Now for it," said Gabriel to Casse Tete in a low tone. "Follow me, don't gallop, keep a steady trot and we'll run for it."

He dashed up into the road before the first squadron and trotted up beside the colonel, who turned his head supposing it to be some officer with orders.

Gabriel rode close beside him at a sharp trot, and as he passed dealt the colonel a blow with his clinched fist on the side of the head that tumbled the astounded officer out of his saddle.

Then, seizing the bridle of the riderless horse which he saw was a good one, away went Gabriel at the full trot of his bay charger, followed by a shout of dismay and rage from the Russians.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHALLENGED.

THE audacity of the rush made by the two French cuirassiers was of itself an element that promised success to their escape.

The idea that they were French never entered the heads of the Russians, who took them for a pair of drunken officers on a wild spree.

The fact that they had dared to knock down a cavalry colonel before his whole regiment, and run away with his horse added to the presumption that they were drunk, and in a moment more the adjutant of the regiment with a couple of orderlies was in full chase, while the first squadron halted to pick up the colonel who was half stunned by the unexpected blow.

Gabriel looked round as he rode and saw three men galloping after, but he never broke his trot; no more did Casse Tete.

They rode on steadily and rapidly, finding that their pursuers with all their galloping only gained on them very slowly.

They had gone nearly a mile on an open road when the Russian adjutant at last gained Gabriel's side, and shouted to him in Russian something which the other rightly interpreted as an order to stop.

The Russian had come up on the left side, on which Gabriel was leading the colonel's horse, which was trotting at the same even gait as the others, and the two orderlies with their horses panting at every stride were about ten paces in rear.

Lenoir shook his rein and swerved off to the right, the led horse following him. As he did so the Russian officer's boot touched the mettlesome charger in the flank, and it lashed out viciously.

The adjutant uttered a cry of pain, and dropped to the rear instantly, clapping his hand on his leg.

Casse Tete laughed.

"That settles your case, my friend," he said aloud.

It was the worst thing he could have done, for he spoke French.

In a moment the Russian officer cried out.

"Ogou! Ogou! Franzi! Franzi!"

[Fire! fire! French! French!]

He pulled out a pistol as he spoke and urged his horse fiercely, firing a long shot.

Gabriel heard the bullet whistle past his ear, and he laughed tauntingly. He saw that they were discovered and did not care now what happened.

The three Russians fired four shots after the fugitives but in vain, and then began to fall into the rear. The discovery that they were following French soldiers damped their ardor immediately.

On went the two adventurers at the same

rapid slashing trot, and the forms of their pursuers were fading into the dark fog when they were startled by a loud shout ahead, and came on a horseman who stood in the road.

"The picket, my officer," cried Casse Tete.

"We must rush him!"

"Bang!"

There was a flash in the fog, and Gabriel's horse gave a bound in the air while the sharp thud of a bullet told he was hit somewhere.

They never halted a moment, but dashed on, when the Russian picket vedette took to his heels and galloped into the fields, shouting as he went.

Presently there was a line of red flashes in the fog on the right, and they heard the whistle of bullets all round them, but for the most part overhead.

Gabriel felt the bay horse beginning to flag, and pulled the colonel's charger up alongside, changing his seat as they rode on with a dexterity that surprised himself, showing how his wits were made alert by the danger.

Then he cast loose the bay, and they dashed on at the same grand sweeping trot till they found themselves at last alone in the dark fog on the high road.

They had passed the pickets safely.

Then Gabriel pulled up to a walk.

"We shall need all these horses can do before we reach our lines," he said to Casse Tete, "and in the mean time we must remember that there is another force of cavalry ahead of us somewhere. We may come on them at a moment we least expect it."

They rode on at a walk for about a mile further, but heard no one behind them.

"It seems to me, my officer," said Casse Tete, "that they have given up the chase."

Gabriel shook his head.

"Not a bit of it. They expect to catch us yet. We shall come on the others before long."

He was right, for in less than an hour's time they saw a red glare through the fog ahead of them, and were almost instantly halted by another picket, whose helmet looming up in the fog showed him to be either a cuirassier or a dragoon.

The click of his carbine-lock as he challenged showed the dragoon, for cuirassiers carry no carbines.

They halted at once, and Gabriel called out something which was not French nor Russian, but the German word, "Friends!"

He knew that there were some Austrians in the Russian camp, and it struck him he might pass for one in the dark.

The Russian recognized the language in the dark, but seemed to be puzzled.

He answered in Russian and fired off his piece.

"Now, my officer," whispered Casse Tete, "now is the time to rush him."

"Keep still," was the answer. "He has called for the corporal, who probably understands German. We will get through. We cannot run through this force as we did the other."

Presently another helmet loomed out of the fog and another dragoon rode up, who came out to our two cuirassiers.

"Who you?" he asked, in broken German.

"Count von Schwartz, of the Imperial Cuirassiers," answered Gabriel, readily. "We are on a mission to the French lines to exchange some prisoners. It is very important that we hurry."

The Russian dragoon listened, but evidently understood little.

"You come see captain," he said, slowly.

"With pleasure," answered Gabriel; and as they rode off he kept up a flood of German conversation, to all of which the dragoon only answered:

"Nichts ferstehe."

When they had got out of sight of the picket, Casse Tete pulled his officer's sleeve and made a motion toward the hilt of his sword, unseen by the dragoon.

Gabriel nodded slightly. Their lives were at stake, and they knew not how long they would be alone.

The dragoon corporal turned his horse to the right off the road toward the glare of a distant fire, saying:

"This way."

Gabriel rode beside him and Casse Tete dropped behind to get on the other side.

They had not gone three yards in the new direction when there was a dull thud, and the unhappy Russian fell forward on his horse's neck with a groan, stabbed in the back by

Casse Tete, who said, as he drew out his dripping sword:

"Poor devil, it's a pity but it had to be done, my officer. This is ticklish work we're on."

Gabriel nodded gloomily. He began to wish that they could get out of the Russian lines without so much bloodshed, but he also knew that if he were taken now, he and his companion could expect no mercy.

Casse Tete put up his sword and they rode away along the road as before at a walk looking sharply ahead and ready for a dash.

Gabriel judged that having passed the picket safely they would have no further trouble, unless the main body of the cavalry column was encamped on the road itself.

They walked their horses on for some distance when they saw the glare of more fires ahead and finally rode into the very midst of a large camp, with the fires smoldering away and the lines of horses at the picket-ropes chewing their hay as they stood while the ground was covered with sleeping men.

They went boldly on taking notice of everything, counting the lines of streets as they went and passing safely among the sleepers till they were startled by the sound of galloping hoofs on the road behind them, while some one was calling out in Russian:

"They have found the dead dragoon," said Gabriel, hurriedly. "Trot up, before the camp is alarmed."

They dashed off through the last streets of the cavalry, but not in time to escape the alarm. The cry of the approaching horseman was caught up behind them and the sleepers began to start up and run out into the road to intercept the two fleeing cuirassiers, firing pistols.

Then came a short exciting dash in which Gabriel and Casse Tete drew their swords and cut at the men who tried to intercept them.

The result of it was that in a few minutes they had cleared the camp and were out on the lonely road again.

Not unpursued though.

The whole camp behind them was roused and they heard the rapid clatter of hoofs behind them as they swept on, coming closer at every stride.

Presently Casse Tete looked back and uttered a cry of angry contempt.

"My officer," he shouted, "it is a squad of miserable hussars that follows. Let them have a taste of the French cuirassier, for the sake of the flag."

Gabriel turned his head and saw that his companion spoke truth. Four hussars on light fleet horses were fast coming up with them unslinging their carbines as they rode.

"Keep your trot," he said to Casse Tete. "They can't hit us at this pace. If they come near enough let them have it, but they only desire that we should stop to fight them. It will give time to cuirassiers to come up to their help."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MEETING.

ON went the cuirassiers at the same fast trot till they saw another fire ahead.

It was the picket reserve on the other side of the cavalry camp, and they heard shouts and cries that told it to be fully on the alert.

Gabriel hastily slung his sword and dived into the holsters of his saddle for the pistols he expected to find there.

To his dismay, each holster pipe was filled by the neck of a bottle of wine. The colonel had been evidently a hard drinker.

"We must get out, each for himself," he said to Casse Tete. "Here they are."

Crack! crack! crack!

Red flashes in the fog, spitting out and followed by the whiz of bullets; then more shots from the hussars in the rear, and a scattering in front.

The next moment they rushed through a mob of twenty or thirty hussars, and scattered the light horses like chaff before the dash of their lordly big charges.

There was a confusion of cutting and stabbing for a few seconds, and then they were off again, the hussars galloping after them, firing pistols and carbines, but not daring to come to close quarters with the men whose strength they had just felt.

Ten minutes later the hussars gave up the chase, and Gabriel observed:

"That is the last of them. Our next hail will be in French, Casse Tete."

He was right. The hussars had no successors and, ten minutes afterward, Casse Tete said, in a tone of great satisfaction:

"We have done it at last, major. Who would

ever have thought it? For my part, if I could find a church by the wayside, I should feel like vowing a candlestick to the Holy Virgin in gratitude."

Now they traveled on unmolested for several hours, the country round them seeming to be entirely deserted. Not a light burned in a cottage, nor did there seem to be any cottages, with or without light. The aspect of desolation was universal, and remained so for several miles of further travel.

Of course they realized that a great part of this dismal prospect was due to the fog and darkness; but none the less it had its effect on their spirits, and when at last they perceived the gleam of a light ahead of them, Casse Tete broke out:

"Thank Heaven! I began to think we had wandered into the desert and got lost."

As he spoke, they heard the rumble and rattle of wheels, and perceived that the light came from the lamps of a vehicle rolling toward them.

Pretty soon it loomed out of the fog, four horses to a traveling carriage, and Gabriel said to Casse Tete:

"Stop it. We might as well know who is coming between the armies."

They separated, drew their swords, and stopped the carriage, the postillions, in great fear, crying for mercy.

Gabriel told them to be quiet, and rode to the door of the carriage.

"Who is coming this way at such a time?" he called out in German. "Show me your passports or turn back."

"Certainly," cried a man's voice inside, in a nervous kind of way. "I have a safe conduct from both parties, gentlemen. I am the Prince of Potsdam, on my way to Berlin. Here are my papers."

Gabriel knew the voice at once, and took care to disguise his own.

"Hand them out here," he replied, gruffly.

The prince handed out a bundle of papers with a shaking hand, and our hero took them to the carriage-lamp.

He found a passport, signed by Talleyrand, Minister of State, and countersigned by Marshal Murat, as chief of the advance, giving license to his Serene Highness, the Prince of Potsdam, to pass through the lines on his way to Berlin.

Besides this was another paper signed by the Russian General, Kutusoff, giving the prince safe conduct through the Russian lines "on business of value to the empire."

Gabriel saw at once that he could not stop his rival, and was about to return him the papers with a bad grace, when a thought struck him. He would play Austrian.

"These are all well enough," he growled in a tone of distrust, "but I don't care a snap of the finger for the French or the Russians. My master is the Emperor of Austria, and you have no Austrian safe conduct."

"There are no Austrian troops on this road, are there?" asked the prince.

"I call myself one, and if you can't show me authority from some Austrian officer, you'll have to turn back," said Gabriel.

"Indeed, I did not think it necessary," said the prince, in some confusion. "I am too well known as a friend of Austria."

"As a friend of France, you mean," our hero interrupted him. "It is well known that you are going to marry a French Princess, and that a Frenchman carried her away from you. Where is she now?"

"She is in this carriage," was the unexpected reply. "I appeal to you, sir, as an officer and a gentleman to let me pass on to the Russian quarters with her. If you are an Austrian, you will find out, when it is too late, that you have done wrong in stopping me. Let me pass, or else take me prisoner. I did not come here to be insulted."

Gabriel listened, and his heart bounded. Inez was in the carriage.

He concealed his feeling, however, and said in his gruffest tone:

"You must come out of that carriage at once. I suspect you of being a spy. Here, Casse Tete, make the postillions dismount."

He had to speak this in French to make Casse Tete understand, and the prince cried:

"Who are you, sir? If you are a Frenchman, you shall rue this insult!"

"I am a Frenchman," returned Gabriel in his fiercest tone, "and if you don't get out of that carriage, I'll run you through the body. Do you hear?"

The door was opened hurriedly and the prince descended into the mud, grumbling and swearing.

"Take him away," said Gabriel to Casse Tete, who forthwith conducted the prince, at the point of his sword, to the roadside, and made him sit down.

Then Gabriel dismounted, went to the door, looked in, and beheld two dark figures. The Prussian had told the truth.

"I am here, mademoiselle," he whispered, "I have escaped, as you see. Do you still wish to go to the convent at Austerlitz?"

He heard Inez sob.

"Oh, monsieur, that I am glad you are safe!

No, no, the convent is closed. They took me to the emperor, and I found that man there before me. I have been sent back. Oh, there is no hope for me, before God or man! I must submit to my fate."

Gabriel felt his heart beating rapidly.

"If you desire to leave this man, I will defend you against all the world," he said earnestly. "I will defy the emperor himself, any one, if you will only give me authority to defend you."

"It is impossible," she said sadly. "Oh, monsieur, forget you ever knew me. You are too noble, too generous, to sacrifice yourself for me."

Gabriel felt her little hand held out to him in the dark, and he seized it and covered it with kisses.

"Oh, mademoiselle," he murmured softly, "if I had but the right to protect you from that villain! But there is only one way I can obtain that right."

He felt her trembling violently, and heard her whisper:

"What way?"

"By turning back at once with me," said Gabriel, surprised at his own audacity. "There must be villages on the road, and where there is a village, there must be a priest."

"Oh, monsieur!" he heard her say, and she snatched away her hand.

Then he heard another voice, that of Babette, say, slyly:

"Indeed, yes, mademoiselle. There is a church close to the post-house at the last station, and the priest's house is close to the road."

Gabriel felt as if he could have hugged Babette for those words, and he went on in low rapid tones:

"It is too late to hesitate, mademoiselle. You hate and loathe this man, and you cannot escape marrying him, save by wedding some one else, even if it be a form. You do not absolutely hate me, and I swear to you that I only seek the right to protect you from this villain. Consent to this ceremony, and I promise to leave you at once in a retired spot, and never to claim any rights that can offend you. Only it will give me the right to kill the Prince of Potsdam if he presumes any further persecution."

Inez said nothing, but he heard her crying in the dark, while Babette whispered to her something the cuirassier heard not.

He waited a little while, and then said in his most respectful way:

"I am sorry mademoiselle cannot trust me. I thought the hand of Heaven had brought about this meeting, as unexpected by us all. But since you prefer to marry the Prince of Potsdam, I have no right to complain. I will bid you farewell, mademoiselle."

"Oh, monsieur, was all she could say and Gabriel, his heart sinking, was just falling back when Babette the maid exclaimed, impulsively:

"Oh, mademoiselle, he too will desert us. Tell him to stay. Anything is better than going back to Berlin."

And as Inez still said not a word Gabriel closed the door of the carriage and said for the last time:

"Farewell, mademoiselle, farewell forever."

Then, as if the last words had roused her, she faltered out:

"Oh, no, no, not forever. Save me from that man. I cannot, cannot bear it."

Gabriel's heart bounded for joy. He hurried back and whispered:

"There is but one way. Do you let me take it?"

She whispered back almost inaudibly:

"Save me from him."

Gabriel waited for no more. He called to Casse Tete:

"Tell that man to march for the Russian camp. If he hesitates, shoot him."

Casse Tete saluted briskly.

"Very good, major. Here, you Prussian pig, get up, right face, march, or I'll quicken you with a bullet."

The clicking of his pistol-lock in the foggy night was so distinct that the Prince of Potsdam jumped up crying out nervously.

"For Heaven's sake, don't shoot!"

"March then!" cried Casse Tete, and away went the prince at a run, while Gabriel mounted his horse and said to the postillions:

"Come, turn this carriage quick. What is the station you just came from?"

"Zittau, worshipful herr," was the answer.

"Can we get horses at Zittau?"

"Yes, mein herr. The road is open as far as Brunn. The French outposts are just outside the town."

"On then to Zittau."

And away rolled the carriage again, with the two cuirassiers riding beside it.

Inside of half an hour they saw lights ahead and the stars began to shine through the fog, while the air became colder. A frost was setting in and the ground was whitening fast.

The carriage rattled up to the post-house at Zittau and the postmaster came out in great surprise.

"I didn't expect you back so soon," he said to the postillon. "What has happened?"

Gabriel interrupted him.

"Never mind talking to the postillion. I am Major Lenoir of the Cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard. I want horses for the next station to Brunn at once. How far is it to Brunn?"

"Forty-five miles, major," said the postmaster, respectfully. "You will get there at daylight, for it is now twelve and the stages are slow at night."

"Very good. Put to the horses. Is there a priest's house near here?"

The postmaster looked amazed.

"A priest? Yes; surely, major, we are not heathens at Zittau. That is his house. Yonder by the church."

He pointed across the road.

"Take care of everything, Casse Tete," said Gabriel, curtly. "I am going over to the house yonder."

"Very good, my officer."

Casse Tete drew a long pistol and sat like a grim statue of vigilance on his horse, while Gabriel rode over to the priest's house, knocked at the door with the hilt of his sword and was presently greeted by an honest-looking old man with a plain sensible face and the black cassock of a priest.

"Father," said Gabriel, abruptly, "I have but little time to lose, so I must give quick questions and ask quick answers. You are the parish priest?"

"Yes; my son."

"I am Major Lenoir of the French army. Will you marry me at once to a lady who is in the carriage yonder?"

The priest smiled slightly.

"My son, this is a strange request at this time. Is the lady of age? Do her parents approve?"

"She has no parents. She is alone in the world. I am her only protector. She travels alone with me. If you refuse, the reputation of the lady will suffer; for we shall go on as we have gone. Do you consent?"

The priest made a gesture of excuse.

"My son, I have refused nothing yet; nor have I consented. I am responsible to my bishop for the marriages in my parish and under ordinary circumstances I should say no. But we are now in a state of war. If I can show to my superior that I was compelled by military force to perform such a ceremony, he would excuse me."

"And would the marriage be valid?" asked Gabriel eagerly.

"A marriage, once sealed by the church is indissoluble," answered the priest solemnly. "His Holiness would excommunicate any one who interfered with it."

"Suppose that person were the emperor of the French?" said Gabriel.

The priest smiled rather proudly.

"All Europe may tremble before him but the church stands up on the rock of Peter and defies him."

"Then you will marry me to this lady?"

"I did not say that my son. I said I might do it under the pressure of force."

Gabriel laid his hand on his sword.

"Then, father, I warn you that if you don't do it I'll cut off your head."

"Then, my son, I will do it for you. You need two witnesses."

Gabriel smiled.

"You shall have my orderly and the postmaster."

He went back to the carriage and in a few words explained to Inez that all was ready.

She trembled violently but made no objection and he helped her out of the carriage. As he did so, he noticed that she still wore her nun's dress and he said to Babette:

"How is this? Can we not procure something more suitable for a wedding?"

Babette took him aside and whispered:

"Monsieur, take her while you can get her no matter what her clothes may be. She is young and timid yet and wants to see her master. If you show you are afraid, she will run away from you yet. Don't you know that women like to be forced to do things they are longing for? Take my advice, monsieur, and make no objections to the dress, if you want mademoiselle."

"But the priest may object."

"Ah, that is different, monsieur. Well then mademoiselle must take off the hood and veil and I will do the same."

She went to her mistress and whispered confidentially with her.

The result was that a few minutes later two ladies in black dresses with India shawls round their shoulders, but with bare heads, stood in the priest's little parlor, while two tall cuirassiers and the puzzled postmaster stood behind them and the priest in his cassock began the service.

Gabriel Lenoir could hardly believe that it was all anything more than a dream as the father finally pronounced the words:

"I pronounce you man and wife. Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder."

Inez was his wife, but under what strange circumstances! He felt awkward and hardly knew what to do so he offered his arm to his

wife and led her from the room without a word.

When he got outside he said to Casse Tete:

"Go back and give this to the priest and ask him for the certificate."

It was a small purse of gold for he had not been robbed of his money at the time of his capture.

They went back to the carriage, and Gabriel, as he handed in his bride, said in a low tone:

"If you prefer to stay here, I will procure you a lodging, but it will be safer to go on to Brunn, where you will have no fears of being discovered."

"Whatever you please, monsieur," was the submissive answer, and Gabriel noticed that all the agitation had gone out of her voice. She spoke naturally and cheerfully.

Presently Casse Tete came back with the marriage certificate, and Gabriel handed it to Inez with the quiet remark:

"The certificate, madame. It secures you from the Prince of Potsdam; but it gives me no rights which you are not willing to accord."

"Thanks, monsieur," was the silvery reply, with a slightly mocking accent, and as Gabriel retired from the door, he could have sworn he heard a low laugh from Babette in the corner.

But he mounted his horse and they rode on for another stage and so for about thirty miles, when Casse Tete observed:

"My officer, these are splendid horses we have, but they will not last forever to follow a carriage that changes every ten miles. Why should not your honor get into the carriage? I will get on the box and we'll lead the horses behind. They'll last to Brunn easily if they have no weight to carry."

Gabriel hesitated. He felt now what he had never felt before—a sensation of bashfulness at the idea of being alone with Inez.

"Wait till the next stage, at least," he said.

"The horses don't seem to me to be flagging."

As he spoke he spurred his own black and the animal responded gamely for a few steps, then slackened again. They began to drop behind the carriage, and the lights of the post-house ahead were a welcome sight. It was clear that even the grand Orloff trotters were getting tired under the weight of their big riders in armor.

As the carriage drew up at the post-house Gabriel asked the postmaster:

"How far to Brunn?"

"Sixteen miles—two stages. You will do it in about an hour and a half."

Casse Tete looked anxiously at his master.

"Shall I dismount, my officer? They can never do sixteen miles more carrying us."

Gabriel nodded reluctantly.

"It must be done. Tie them behind."

Then he went to the door of the carriage and said in a low voice:

"I am very, very sorry to intrude, madame, but the fact is my horse is giving out, and it is necessary to lead him. May I beg the liberty of riding inside for two stages?"

"Certainly, monsieur," replied the sweet voice of Inez from within. "We were pitying those poor horses all last stage. Enter freely. I will not bite you."

And he heard a low titter from Babette.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE CARRIAGE.

GABRIEL feeling as if his blushes must be seen in the darkness, was getting into the carriage when Babette suddenly cried:

"Oh, monsieur! I forgot. What is to become of Monsieur Forton?"

"Monsieur Forton?"

Gabriel had forgotten for the moment the real name of his grim orderly.

"Oh, Casse Tete, you mean! Yes; he is to ride on the box, of course."

"Please, monsieur," asked Babette, "can I not ride on the box, too? This carriage has room for two comfortably, and you and madame will have a hundred things to say to each other that you will not want all the world to hear."

Without waiting to hear his answer, the maid came bounding out of the carriage, nearly falling into Gabriel's arms as she did so; and a few minutes later our hero found himself rolling over the high road to Brunn, alone with Inez for the first time in his life, and listening to the chatter of Babette on the box above; for the smart Norman maid was talking away to Casse Tete as if for a wager.

But inside the carriage Inez said never a word, and Gabriel found the silence so monotonous and embarrassing that he at last stammered:

"I hope—mademoiselle—that is—madame—is not offended at my presumption."

"In what, monsieur?"

The tone of her voice had an indescribable accent of mockery in it that he did not comprehend in the least, partly because it was so dark he could not see her face.

"In entering this carriage. I could not help it, indeed."

"I acquit you of blame, monsieur," she said rather coldly. "It was evident that you were

very unwilling to endure my society, even for a few hours."

"Oh, no, do not say that—mademoiselle—I mean madame—I longed for it—I—I—but I dared not hope—I—I thought that it would offend you."

"Why should it offend me, monsieur? You have a perfect right now, to enter my presence when you wish. You took care to secure the right when I was in your power."

Gabriel turned to her impulsively.

"Oh, you are angry with me. I have been a brute to force you to marry me; but indeed I saw no other way to help you or preserve you from that man. Can you ever forgive me? Inez—I beg pardon. I mean mademoiselle—I mean—"

"Do you know exactly what you mean, monsieur?" she asked quietly. "I thought that I had become Madame Lenoir, to-night; but it seems as if you do not recognize my title."

"Oh, if I dared to hope that you were not ashamed to assume that title how I should bless this night!" cried Gabriel fervently. "Is it possible, Inez, that you will do so?"

"You have given me no choice in the matter, monsieur," she answered calmly. "I am your wife, and as the priest told us, a marriage consecrated by the church is indissoluble."

Gabriel's heart began to thump like a steam engine when he asked:

"And you really consider yourself my wife in truth?"

She laughed rather nervously.

"How can I do any thing else, when I have the certificate here in my bosom, beside your passport, which I saved for you, though it is a false one."

"And is it possible—by any chance," he went on, getting more confused, "that the day may come when I may hope—that I—I am not altogether hateful to you?"

"Hateful to me, monsieur? Why should my husband be hateful to me?"

"Well, if not hateful, perhaps an object of indifference?"

"Indifference, monsieur? Ah, you cannot be a good Catholic."

"Not a good Catholic? Why not?"

"Because if you were, you would heed the promise you made before the priest?"

"The promise, Inez? Ah, you cannot doubt that I would shed the last drop of my blood in your defense?"

"Was that what you promised?"

"No—in fact, I was so confused, so happy, so fearful of interruption that I had hardly heeded the words, but I will keep every promise I made. I ask nothing from you but the right to protect you."

"It seems to me, monsieur," she said, "that you are hardly aware of what you have done. I cannot claim such indulgence. I hesitated, but I married you with my eyes open. Do you know what are the duties of a husband, monsieur, as the priest told us in the service?"

Mechanically Gabriel repeated:

"To love, honor, and cherish in sickness and health, in riches and poverty, till death us do part."

Then he was silent. For the first time he began to realize the responsibility.

"And do you know what are the duties I promised to assume?" she continued.

He was silent. He did not dare speak.

Slowly, in her soft silver tones she said:

"To love, honor and obey, in sickness and in health, in riches and poverty, till death us do part."

Then there was a long silence in the dark carriage. Gabriel could not see his companion, who had shrunk away to the opposite side, and it was in a whisper he said at last:

"And can you do all this?"

"It is my duty now," was the response, in an equally faint whisper.

He put out his hand in the dark; it met hers, and in another moment her head was resting on his breast, while he whispered:

"Oh, Inez, is it possible you love me?"

"Is it not my duty?" she said again, but this time there was a laughing ring in her voice. "I was brought up in the church, monsieur, and my confessor told me to prefer duty to pleasure at any time."

"Then you have no pleasure in loving me?" he persisted.

She made no direct answer, but he felt a soft little pinch on the back of his hand, as if to rebuke his undue curiosity, and somehow, within a very short time after Gabriel Lenoir and his strangely-made bride were talking together as if they had known each other for years, discussing the future.

"You will leave me at Brunn," she told him, "for a soldier's wife must be content to see but little of her husband while hostilities go on. You must also tell the emperor boldly of your marriage. I am a poor coward, but you are a brave man, and will not be afraid to face him. He will storm perhaps, but you must be firm and refuse to tell him where I am. There is a lady in Brunn, whom I know, who will take me into her house, and no one will be able to find me. As soon as you have done that, send the carriage back after that poor Prince of Pots-

dam. I begin to feel sorry at the scurvy way we treated him now that it is impossible he can marry me. After that, we must trust to him and the Empress Josephine to work our pardon from the emperor."

He agreed willingly enough to this, and so the time passed on till they saw the light of early dawn stream into the carriage, and soon after were halted by the French pickets outside of Brunn.

Gabriel got out and announced himself to the officer, who expressed himself as much amazed, but recognized him instantly.

"You have become quite a famous man in the Grand Army, major," he said, "and even the Gascons of the Death's Heads begin to swear by you, though they still call you Major Blancbec. I heard Marshal Ney make a bet with Marshal Murat the other day that you would be back in safety yet. Yes, you can pass. Ah, who is that in the carriage with you?"

"Hu-h!" said Gabriel, pretending slyness. "Not a word, on the honor of a soldier. You understand."

"I understand," said the chasseur officer, with a wink. "Ah, we French are all the same. Good luck, major."

They drove on into the city and stopped by Inez's direction at a large house in the suburbs.

"It is the house of Margravine of Olmutz," she told Gabriel. "She will take care of me. Now, my noble husband, it is time. We must part."

One close embrace, the first Gabriel had ever dared to take, and then he took her to the house and consigned her to the care of an old lady, who saluted her as if she had known her all her life, and said to Gabriel:

"Have no uneasiness, monsieur. We will take the best care of mademoiselle."

"Oh, yes," added Inez, "they know me well here. Is the Margravine visible, Emilia?"

"Not yet, mademoiselle. I will wake her, and she will be delighted at your visit."

Then Gabriel bowed low, the door shut, and his new-made wife vanished.

He sent off the carriage as she had directed, and then he and Casse Tete mounted their weary horses and rode into Brunn.

CHAPTER XX.

THE EMPEROR.

WHEN the two cuirassiers reached the headquarters, indicated by a large flag, it was broad daylight.

The first thing that attracted their attention was the tall bearskin shako of the sentry in front of the flag.

"Hola!" muttered Casse Tete, "so the old one is here, is he?"

By the old one he meant the emperor, for he recognized the shako of the Imperial Guard which always accompanied the person of the emperor himself.

They rode up to the flag, dismounted, and Casse Tete held the horses while Gabriel advanced till the sentry halted him.

"Can't pass. His majesty is asleep yet."

Gabriel threw open his cloak and showed his uniform, and the sentry saluted.

"Sorry, my officer, but the orders are positive. No one is to pass except one man, and we shall never see him again."

"And who is this one man?" asked Lenoir.

"Poor Major Lenoir, who they say was shot by the Austrians at Zittau."

Gabriel smiled.

"Major Lenoir was not shot. I am Major Lenoir myself. Who said I was shot?"

"A Prussian gentleman—they said he was a prince who was here last night. He went away with a safe conduct, major. You can pass, if you are really Major Lenoir."

"I really am. If you doubt it you can call your officer."

"No, major, I am satisfied."

Then Gabriel passed on, and entered the courtyard of a large house, where he found a guard of grenadiers dozing about on the stone benches and was stopped by a second sentry at an inner doorway.

His name secured his passage as before, and he ascended a staircase to an ante-room, when a Mameluke in all the glory of crimson velvet and gold lace started up from a sofa where he had been sleeping, and said in broken French:

"Pas passe—Defendu."

[Not pass—forbidden.]

Gabriel threw off his cloak. He knew Roustan, and that the emperor must be in the next room.

"I am Major Lenoir," he said, "and have come to report to the emperor."

Roustan put up the saber he had drawn, and fell back pointing to the inner door.

"Il est la," [he is there] he said.

Then Gabriel knocked at the door, and was almost instantly answered.

"Come in. Who is it?"

The cuirassier opened the door, and there was the emperor fully dressed as always when in campaign, sitting up in a large easy-chair before a table covered with papers.

"Aha," he exclaimed as soon as he saw the

cuirassier, "so you are back again like the bad penny. Well, monsieur, what have you done?"

"I came from Berlin a week ago by the order of General Duroc, to find the numbers of the Russian army."

"Have you found them?"

"Yes, sire. They have eighty-five or ninety thousand men, including eight thousand cavalry."

The emperor nodded and pulled a map toward him.

"Where are they cantoned?"

"They are in bivouac, sire, this morning between Koniggratz and Olmutz. Yesterday afternoon their cavalry began a forward movement to Olmutz, and the whole army will be there by to night."

Again the emperor nodded with compressed lips, and asked:

"Anything more? Who is in command?"

"General Kutusoff, sire, nominally, but the emperors of Austria and Russia are both in camp."

The emperor touched a spring bell.

"Tell Berthier I want him," he said to Roustan the Mameluke.

Then when the Egyptian had gone, he said to Lenoir emphatically:

"You have done well, sir, very well. I seldom mistake my men. You know that your namesake the colonel has got a brigade?"

"No, sire, I didn't know it."

"He has. Consequently Major Solage, your senior, becomes lieutenant-colonel, and you are left senior major. Do you wish to join your regiment or remain on special duty? You have your choice."

Gabriel's heart began to beat rapidly.

"Please your majesty, I would rather join my regiment. The fact is, I am married—"

"What?"

The emperor's usually marble face was contorted with passion in a moment, and his gray eyes shot out flames.

"Married! You! You have dared without my leave, monsieur?"

"I have," replied Gabriel, shaking with his nervous agitation, but determined not to yield before the autocrat's glance. "I was married yesterday night to Mademoiselle Inez de Real, maid of honor to her majesty the empress, and I did it to save her from marrying the Prince of Potsdam."

As he uttered the last words he felt as if some one had poured cold water down his back and he stiffened up and looked at his master with a sense of relief.

As for the emperor, he sat back in his chair staring at the Alsatian as if he could not believe his senses.

"Repeat that again," he said, presently.

Gabriel repeated his story briefly, and the emperor gave a sneering laugh.

"So you think that you are competent to decide the fate of Europe, young man. You undertake to contradict my plans. Where is that romantic maid of honor?"

"My wife, sire, is in a place where I am not at liberty at present to reveal, even to your majesty."

"Why not?"

The emperor's tones were calm. He did not seem as angry as Gabriel had expected to find him.

"Because if I do, your majesty may declare the marriage null as you did that of the Prince Jerome, and I am not one of your majesty's family."

The emperor laughed in a hard, bitter way.

"I should think not. No, you have the impudence of all the Bonapartes put together. It is a lucky thing for you that you are a brave man, Major Lenoir, or I would order you out to be shot. Instead of that, I am going to make your death serve France. You will report to Colonel Solage, and rejoin your regiment. I shall take care to put you in the hottest place to be found on the field, and I expect you to leave Madame Lenoir a widow before one week is out. Do you understand me, Major Lenoir?"

"I do, sire. I am to get killed."

"See that you do it as quick as possible. If you are alive this time next week I shall have something further to say to you. Good-morning."

He turned to his papers just as Marshal Berthier, chief of staff, came sleepily in rubbing his eyes, and Gabriel Lenoir went soberly out from the presence of the Emperor of the French with the one thought buzzing in his head:

"He told me to get killed, but he was not as angry as I thought, and he did not say he would break the marriage."

He found Casse Tete standing by the horses, all three, man and brutes, nodding in the early morning sunlight, and he roused up his orderly, rode down the street and inquired for the quarters of the Death's Head Cuirassiers.

He was directed to the public gardens behind the archducal palace, where he found the regiment in bivouac, the new colonel, Solage, in his shirt sleeves watching the men at work on their horses and every one busy and dirty.

He went up and reported to the colonel, who eyed him from head to foot searchingly.

"So you are the senior major, already. It is lucky for you that you waited to join. The captain had sworn to drive you out, but they'll have to stand it now."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN QUARTERS.

THERE was no disguising the fact from himself that Gabriel Lenoir was not liked in the Death's Head Cuirassiers.

As he scanned the long lines of dark faces, some of them almost like those of Arabs, he caught nothing but scowls in his direction, and when the officers began to come up and report after stable duty, and found him standing by the colonel, there was not one friendly visage among them.

He had but one superior in rank in the regiment; for, the lieutenant-colonel having been killed, the senior major had taken his place, and had command of the Death's Heads, Colonel Lenoir having a brigade under his control.

Therefore Solage was his only superior; and Solage could not in decency quarrel with his second in command, while all the rest were below him.

So Gabriel settled down to life in the corps, from which he had been so long absent, and set himself at once to the task of making friends with his brother officers.

He was assigned quarters by the adjutant, and found Casse Tete there almost as soon as himself, polishing, scouring, rubbing down his master's chargers, and looking after breakfast, all at once.

"We are in luck, major," he cried, as soon as he saw Lenoir approach. "I thought we should never see the big black again that you took from the Austrians at Ulm, but here he is, the same as ever. It seems the colonel gave orders to keep your horses till you came back, when every one else wanted to take them. Ah, he is a good man, that Colonel Lenoir, and it is no wonder that I like you so, with the same name."

It was indeed true, and Gabriel found that he was incomparably the richest officer in the regiment in the matter of horseflesh, a consideration of importance to cuirassiers, whose heavy weights require the best of mounts.

He took his breakfast alone, and felt rather lonely, but he was kept up by the thought of a pair of dark eyes he knew not to be very far off from him; and he had fallen into a reverie on the subject, when a grim, dark-visaged cuirassier, in full uniform, stood before him at a salute, and extended him a letter.

"Who is this from?" he asked.

"Colonel Lenoir, my officer."

Gabriel opened it and read:

"Major Gabriel Lenoir, of the Death's Head Cuirassiers, will report at once to these headquarters for special duty."

"By order of Col. comdg. Brigade E.

"BELLEISLE, A. G."

Gabriel receipted the envelope and handed it back, and then called Casse Tete.

"Is the Black Austrian fit for work?"

"Yes, major. The Russian will be all right to-morrow, but he wouldn't do much to-day."

"Saddle the Austrian then."

He inquired for Colonel Lenoir's quarters and found that worthy warrior in a tent outside the town. He had three regiments and a battery under his orders.

Now that he was away from his dark regiment, Lenoir, senior, was a different man. He greeted Gabriel cordially, and said:

"I know they don't treat you well among the Death's Heads, but it is a point of honor with them to have no fair men among them. I have heard of all your exploits, and I am proud of you. I wished to treat you civilly when I met you at Ulm, but I really did not dare. I believe those fellows would rise in mutiny if they saw you getting good treatment in the regiment. They don't mind the emperor promoting you as long as he keeps you away from them; but you'll never be happy among them. How would you like to come on my staff?"

Gabriel flushed with pleasure.

"I should like it of all things, colonel, but I have orders from his majesty."

"What orders?" asked the colonel, seeing he hesitated.

"To stay with the regiment and get killed inside of a week," said Gabriel, frankly.

Lenoir stared and then laughed.

"Why, what have you been about to get such an order?"

"I have married, colonel."

Colonel Lenoir made a grimace. He was a bachelor and woman-hater.

"I should think he might leave you to die a natural death. Whom did you marry? Or is it not a fair question?"

"I have no objection to answering it, colonel. My wife was maid of honor to her majesty the Empress Josephine."

Lenoir, senior, whistled.

"The devil! Not the one that was playing nun, and came near costing his majesty a fit when she ran away from Berlin?"

"I fear it is the same, colonel."

"Well, major, all I can say is that you are a

devilish lucky fellow, in love and war. Do you know who that lady was?"

"I presume so, colonel. At least I married her as Mademoiselle Inez de Real."

The colonel took a pinch of snuff, in imitation of the emperor.

"It is not every husband that knows all about his wife," he said. "That lady is first cousin to the Empress of Austria, the King of Naples, and half the royalist princes in Europe. She was to marry the Prince of Potsdam for State reasons, and you have spoiled one of the prettiest little plots that Talleyrand ever concocted. No wonder he told you to get killed. He cannot annul the marriage, because that would leave a stain on the lady's name; and the only chance he has of accomplishing his ends is to make her a widow as quick as possible. My friend, you have sealed your own fate. If you love Talleyrand, you are bound to get killed."

"But I don't love Talleyrand," retorted the young man, smiling. "I don't intend to get killed, either, colonel, if I can keep my head safe with my hands. I intend to see you a marshal and to be a colonel myself before I'm ready to die."

Lenoir looked at him with some admiration, as he growled:

"I believe you'll do it yet. There, there, I'm sorry you won't go on my staff. I would have made it pleasant for you. But, as it is, you're better off with the regiment. We shall have a battle before long. Let me see. This is the 30th of November. The Russians are advancing. They think they can beat us. We shall see, about the day after to-morrow. Good-by, major."

Gabriel returned to his quarters, feeling that he had one friend, in Brunn; and as his duties with the regiment were a mere nothing while they lay in bivouac, he strolled out in the evening, wrapped in his cloak, with the object of seeking a stolen interview with his wife.

He had no difficulty in finding the house, but the courage necessary to go up there boldly failed him; and he knew, moreover, that he might be tracked, and so give his wife into the power of the emperor or Talleyrand. He did not know which of them was really implicated in the State schemes he had frustrated by his wedding.

Hesitating over what to do, he had paced up and down the street several times, when he heard his name called in low tones by some one behind him.

Looking round, he perceived a small door in the wall that surrounded the garden of the house, and recognized the head of Babette, the Norman maid of Inez, peeping out after him, and whispering:

"Come in, quick. Some one may see you."

We may be sure the cuirassier was not slow to obey the invitation; and he was in at that low door in a moment, when Babette locked it and whispered:

"I told madame you would come. I said so. She thought that his majesty would punish you and come to hunt for her; but I knew better. Grand folks think we servants don't see nor hear; but I know what goes on as well as the ladies, if I do get my news at the key-hole, as the saying is."

Gabriel laughed. He felt so happy that he hugged Babette, saying:

"You're a splendid girl, Babette, worth your weight in gold. How is she?"

"Oh, crying all day, as usual. Some ladies are never pleased. One would think that she was going to marry that prince still, though I told her that was impossible now."

"Impossible? I should say so, as long as I am above ground. And I don't intend to go under it for a little while yet, Babette."

"I hope not, monsieur. I suppose you want to see madame; but I must tell you that will not be so easy in the house. The Margravine hates the French and will not have one of them in the house if she can help it. Still I think I can manage it, if you will stay here. There is a summer house in the corner of the garden and I will get madame to slip out here and see you."

She conducted him to a small summer-house behind some closely clipped box-hedges, which looked as dismal as summer-houses are apt to do in the last days of November when the days are cold and wet.

Here Gabriel waited patiently for nearly a quarter of an hour at the end of which time Inez made her appearance and whispered anxiously:

"I have only a few moments. Oh how silly of you it was to come; but I am just as silly, for I cannot help being glad in spite of the danger. Tell me quick, was the emperor very angry?"

"Not so much as I expected; but he ordered me to get killed within a week so as to make you a widow. If I fail to do that in the next battle I am to report for orders."

Then he told her all about his interview with the emperor and added:

"But I am not going to get killed to oblige him, Inez, and I could not help seeing that he was not so angry as he pretended to be. There is something hidden under all this. Tell me,

dearest, who are you? Colonel Lenoir told me that you were quite a lofty personage and made out that I had the impudence of Satan to marry you."

She gave a soft little laugh as she nestled under his huge cloak.

"It is true, monsieur. I am connected by blood with the Bourbon family, and it was to secure the Prussian alliance that his majesty wished me to marry the Prince of Potsdam. But that is all over now. The Margravine of Olmutz is a distant cousin of mine, who hates Prussians and French with equal sincerity. She does not know that I am married, but thinks that I have run away from the prince again and has promised to take care of and hide me. When she finds out what has happened I fear she will be very angry. In the mean time I am hidden here and no one can find me. If our people win this battle they expect, things will be better for both of us. Here is a paper which the prince left in the carriage behind him. I do not know what it is, but it may be of value to you. Take it with you. And now it is time to say farewell. They will be looking for me if I stay long."

And Gabriel Lenoir, sorely against his will, parted with Inez, not knowing when he should see her again and went back to his quarters with the paper she had given him in his pocket, almost forgotten.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SUN OF AUSTERLITZ.

WHEN Gabriel Lenoir reached his quarters he found everything in such a bustle that all thought of the paper in his pocket was banished from his mind.

The regiment had received orders to move and the men were packing and saddling in silence by firelight, with that celerity and silence which comes to old soldiers in a campaign.

Casse Tete had his master's property all in order, the horses ready, and inside of ten minutes the late quarters of the Death's Head Cuirassiers were silent and deserted while a column of shrouded figures, with crested helmets and big black horses, was moving off at a walk down the street of Brunn to the high road that led to the Hungarian frontier by way of Possoritz and the little village of Austerlitz.

They fell in behind the rest of Colonel Lenoir's brigade, traveled all night in a drizzling rain-storm, and went into bivouac below the lights of Pratzen, where they remain all the next day, during which troops were moving into position all around them and it was evident that a great battle was impending.

To Gabriel Lenoir the inactivity of this day was very trying. He longed for action and, for the first time in his career since he had entered his regiment he found that he was ignorant of what transpired round him, and had to stay in camp and watch movements of whose object he knew nothing.

Late in the evening of that day—the 1st of December 1805—how well they all remembered it in after years!—the soldiers in the French camp heard the rumble of artillery from the direction of Olmutz and saw a red glare on the heights of Pratzen.

There was a general feeling of restless excitement throughout the camp and even the dignified veterans of the Guard were not as impassive as usual.

They knew the Russians had come.

What force had the enemy, what force the French only one man knew, and he kept the secret locked in his breast.

Gabriel Lenoir knew the strength of the Russians and wished he knew how many men were clustered round the French eagles, but the knowledge was denied him.

The distant rumbling kept on and the whole sky was red with the fires of the Austrians when the night mists began to rise as usual and shrouded the whole prospect in gloom.

The Death's Head Cuirassiers were at their suppers after cleaning horses, when the order came round to saddle up and be ready to move.

This roused the excitement to fever heat and when the men realized that the whole brigade had the same orders they could hardly be restrained from cheering. They thought the battle was about to begin in the night and the fog.

But as soon as the horses were saddled and the ranks formed another order came that quieted them down.

The men were to rest on their arms all night and keep up their fires brightly.

"No fight till to-morrow, major," observed Solage to Lenoir. "I wish those Russians were all at the devil. They're going to rob us of a night's sleep for nothing."

Casse Tete came to his master to ask:

"Which horse will you ride to-morrow, sir? The Russian and Austrian are both in good condition now."

"Which will carry me furthest?"

"The Russian, my officer. He is a giant. But then he may give you trouble."

"How, Casse Tete?"

"Oh, your honor knows what these drilled horses are. He may take you into the midst of the Russians when he sees their uniforms."

On that account I would say take the other. Besides he is fat and wants work."

"Very well, Casse Tete. Saddle the Austrian."

He remained by his fire for a while, but his position in the regiment was too disagreeable for him to remain quiet long. He had no one to speak to but his orderly and Solage, and the latter was decidedly cool and averse to conversation.

Noting the fact that the brigade lay next to the grenadiers of the Guard, he strolled over to one of their fires to chat with the officers, too proud to approach those of his own regiment who declined to associate with him.

He found these strangers courteous and cordial, and found also that they had heard his name and knew of his peculiar position in the regiment.

"Never mind, major, observed one grenadier-officer, consolingly: 'to-morrow may make great changes to a good many of us and you may find your account among the rest.'"

Gabriel tried to feel comforted by the idea but he could not help being gloomy and after a few words strolled on toward a little hillock on the left of the guard from which he hoped to obtain a better view of the enemy.

To reach this hill he had to pass among the camp-fires of the grenadiers, and suddenly became aware that a little man in a gray overcoat was also strolling among the fires, exchanging a few words with every soldier as he passed.

He knew the emperor in an instant. He had seen him before on the eve of a battle when he was simply General Bonaparte, circulating among the men dropping words of praise and encouragement. On such occasions the emperor rarely spoke to officers, except to snub them, while to the common soldiers he was familiar to a degree only pardonable because of its rarity.

All things considered, Gabriel thought it best to keep out of the way of his majesty, but he forgot that his tall form, cuirassier helmet and long cloak made him a conspicuous figure.

He was retiring out of view when he heard the voice of the emperor cry sharply:

"Holla, Monsieur le Cuirassier, what are you doing here? Come hither!"

Then there was nothing for it but to turn round, salute and answer:

"I crave pardon, sire, but I was only taking a stroll."

The emperor beckoned him up and looked at him from head to foot in his most awe-inspiring manner. He was, in fact, trying to stare Gabriel down; but the young man refused to be cowed.

"Well, major," said the emperor at last in the driest of tones: "so you are determined to show that you defy my orders."

"On the contrary, sire," replied Gabriel, calmly, "I was considering at that moment how best to obey them so that your majesty might have no reason to complain."

"Did I not tell you to return to your own regiment and get killed?" asked the emperor.

"I have obeyed your majesty. Colonel Lenoir asked me to go on his staff and I refused in obedience to orders, sire."

The emperor shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, see that you obey them to-morrow. I expect you to lead the regiment."

"That is impossible, sire, while Lieutenant-colonel Solage remains my senior."

The emperor smiled.

"True. I had forgotten the details. Well, get killed as quick as you can."

He was turning away after this cynical speech when he seemed to remember something and asked, abruptly:

"Ah, by-the-by, where did you say your wife was, major?"

"In safety, sire. That was all I said."

Then Gabriel saluted and went away to his quarters, the emperor looking after him with a slight smile, and muttering:

"He has stuff in him, that young man."

The night passed quietly, and Gabriel was lying, wrapped in his cloak before his horse's head, half-awake in the early hours of the morning when his ear became aware that the ground was trembling as if distant thunder were growling.

Raising his head to listen he found that the men, as they lay in line before the horses, were waking up and listening too.

Presently several officers rode by and one of them said to Solage:

"The ball will open at sunrise. The enemy are trying to turn our flanks."

Gabriel, as they passed on, noted the cocked hats of officers of the general staff, and longed to understand what was going on, but did not ask any questions.

Presently there was a murmur in the whole army and he heard the grenadiers getting under arms.

Then up trotted an orderly to say:

"The brigade general's compliments, colonel. You will mount your men and move down behind Marshal Soult's corps."

Then came the subdued bustle of mounting and the dark column of the Death's Heads

moved out of its bivouac at a walk, the men still shrouded in their long cloaks.

"The battle is about to begin," thought our hero; but he was wrong, for the regiment had to dismount and wait a weary length of time by the marshy borders of a little stream before the sun rose.

And all this time the rumble and rattle of the enemy's artillery could be heard plainly moving off to the left, though the fog was so thick nothing could be seen.

Presently out of the fog on some low ground to the right they began to hear the rattle and roar of volleys with the heavy, snapping reports of brass cannon; but still no order came to the Death's Heads to move.

At last a shaft of yellow light pierced the fog and they saw the sun rising, when as if by magic the vapors grew thinner and dispersed, bringing into view the whole battle-field.

Then, for the first time, Gabriel Lenoir saw what had been done and what was to be done.

Before him and the cavalry was a dense array of infantry soldiers—Soul's corps—at the borders of a little stream, and on the other side of the stream rose a steep hill crowned with a village and a church spire, but bare of defenders, while the glittering columns of the Russian army were describing a wide circle to envelop the French left wing several miles off.

He turned round in his saddle to look to the rear and saw that they were in front of a little hill on the summit of which the emperor himself, on a white horse, and surrounded by a glittering staff was pointing to the Russians and giving orders.

As the last speck of mist broke up, so did the group of officers, and went galloping off in all directions.

One of them, a stout man with a Hebrew face—Marshal Soult—came tearing by the cuirassiers at full speed and in a few moments more the bugles sounded, the infantry moved forward to take the heights of Pratzen and the battle of Austerlitz had begun.

Thirty minutes later cannon were roaring all round the heights of Pratzen, the Death's Head Cuirassiers were defiling past the village church, but the French were in full possession of the key of the battle-field, without firing a shot.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DEAD OR TRIUMPHANT.

BUT the French were not destined to occupy the position which the Russians had vacated so foolishly, without molestation.

Presently the brigade of Colonel Lenoir was ordered to move out to the rear of the new position and beheld long lines of the enemy advancing to retake it, headed by the Russian Imperial Guard.

A large body of cavalry too was seen to come tearing up from a distant part of the battle-field behind the Russians, and as they halted each man dropped a grenadier who had been riding behind him to take part in the strife which now became furious all over the plateau.

What was going on in other parts of the field Gabriel knew not, all his attention being concentrated on his own duties.

The cavalry was kept busily employed for some time driving off the enemy's horse, but had not come to close contest yet when a staff officer came tearing down from Marshal Soult and was seen speaking eagerly to General Latour Maubourg who headed the cuirassiers.

A few minutes later the same officer came galloping up to Solage and told him:

"You are ordered to come with me. A Russian battery is playing the devil to the left and it must be taken."

Solage nodded.

"All right. The Death's Heads will do it."

Then they moved off at a trot over the field already well covered with dead bodies of men and horses, while the humming of round shot over their heads told that they were coming into a hot place.

They found Marshal Soult in the midst of a hot fire and saw before them a field covered with smoke.

French regiments, in irregular masses, fringed with fire and smoke, were slowly falling back toward the marshal, several batteries of artillery were firing madly away amid dead and dying horses, broken carriages and all the confusion of a losing fight.

The marshal rode up to them and pointed out into the smoke.

"The enemy are there, colonel," he said rapidly. "Lenoir's brigade will charge their right. I want you to dash at the center. There are at least thirty guns there and whether there are infantry supports or not I don't know. I want those guns quieted. My men will support you."

Solage saluted. He was rather pale, for any one could see they were going on a desperate service.

But he drew his sword, sounded the trot, and the Death's Head Cuirassiers swept forward over the smoke-hidden field.

It was the first time Gabriel had seen them in a desperate charge, and his blood thrilled with pride as he looked along the line of dark, stern

faces, the black helmets and cuirasses, the sable chargers. A line of gloomy terrible horsemen they looked, where the only points of light were the bright swords and the fierce gleaming eyes of the soldiers.

The exhausted footmen saw them coming and looked round to cheer them; the wearied artillerymen paused in their frantic ramming and sponging to wave their hats and shout; the smoke hung heavy over the field; the round shot came tearing through their ranks; but the dark lines closed sternly up and moved silently on at the same steady trot; the earth trembling beneath them, the clanking of their armor drowning all other sounds.

Gabriel rode abreast of his chief, and so they went on till they saw a red sheet of fire leap out of the bluish pall of smoke in front.

Then came a sickening crash and they saw the colonel's body literally blown into bloody fragments by a twelve-pound shot, while at least a dozen ghastly gaps appeared in the ranks of the terrible Death's Head Cuirassiers.

They had met a salvo of artillery at short range, and even those iron men staggered and began to pull at their horses, slackening their trot.

Then it was that Gabriel Lenoir, waving his sword, shouted like thunder:

"Follow me, Death's Heads. *Who will go furthest, the blonde or the blacks?*"

His answer was a stern shout, and the ranks closed up firmer than before.

Then with another roar of "*Vive L'Empereur!*" the Death's Head Cuirassiers burst out of the pall of smoke and dashed into the midst of a long line of guns, stabbing horses and gunners and riding up and down the battery raging like demons, silencing the whole thirty guns in as many seconds.

The stillness that followed was broken by a wild cheering in the smoke behind them, and answered by a terrible volley in front as a line of Russian infantry came running down toward them.

For a moment it seemed as if the bold horsemen were doomed in the hour of their triumph.

Then came the thunder and rattle of more cavalry on the right and down rushed Lenoir's brigade to the help of the Death's Heads, while the wearied infantry of Soult plucking up fresh heart came sweeping over the fields to secure the guns.

The Russian infantry stricken in flank by Lenoir, in front by the maddened Black Cuirassiers, threw down their arms and surrendered by scores.

From that moment the battle seemed to Gabriel like a dream of blood and revenge as he rode among the furious horsemen, cutting and stabbing mercilessly at the fleeing infantry.

When he came to his senses fully he found that there were no Russians nearer than a mile; that their army was cut in half, and that the batteries of the victorious French were playing on dense helpless masses of men in the valley below, while the battle was virtually over.

He looked around for his regiment, remembering that he was now its major.

Some distance off behind him he spied Casse Tete with a single trumpeter, and he rode back and ordered the latter to blow the rally.

And then, from all over the field, with dripping swords, their armor streaked with blood, some wounded, all looking as if tired out with slaughter, the grim men of Gascony came trooping back to that familiar call.

There was no more fighting in that part of the field, but it took a good half-hour to collect the regiment together and form a line. They came in singly, by twos, by threes, in squads; some with officers, more without, but as they came up every man made a punctilious salute to Gabriel, who sat on his horse in front of the new line, and the young man felt that he had at last conquered his enemies. One by one, the officers who had looked upon him so freeingly before, rode up, and saluted with respect, and when, at last, the regiment was formed, the adjutant, his face covered with half-dried blood from a saber cut, reported and asked:

"What are the orders, major? You command the Death's Heads now."

The words made our hero start, though he knew them to be true before.

He commanded the Death's Heads.

But as he looked over the diminished line of dark horsemen he sighed:

"Yes, I command—what is left. Have you taken the reports?"

"Yes, major."

"How many men are lost?"

"We went into action with four squadrons of two hundred men each. We can muster three hundred and fifty blades fit for duty now, but there are a hundred and twenty-seven who will come back to the regiment in a month or two."

Ten minutes' fighting had reduced the regiment to less than half its numbers and of the captains and lieutenants only sixteen were left out of thirty-seven or eight. Grim work in such a time.

Gabriel cast his eyes over the field and saw a body of cavalry rallying at some distance in

the rear. He led the regiment there, and found Colonel Lenoir swearing at his men.

"My Death's Heads have done three times the work you have, and they're back, while you haven't got your reports ready yet!" he roared to a group of colonels who were trying to get their men in shape.

Then to Gabriel he said with a curt nod:

"Take your regiment and report to his majesty by the church at Pratzen."

He did not express surprise or ask after Solage. Probably he knew or suspected what had happened.

Gabriel led his diminished column slowly over the bloody field, where the horses started at every few steps to avoid treading on a dead body, and at last came to the little village of Pratzen, which he found full of troops and where he saw the imperial standard floating from the church tower.

As he rode under the walls and halted, he looked up and saw the emperor, in the familiar gray coat and three-cornered hat, with a telescope at his eye, watching the smoke in the distant valley.

His own eyes naturally turned that way, and he saw a sight he never forgot, and which was one of the most fearful episodes of that fearful battle.

Down in the valley, half a mile off, was a small lake, covered with ice and black with Russian fugitives, fleeing to the other side to escape the ravages of the French guns. As he looked, a grand salvo of artillery was fired, and the balls could be seen to strike the ice.

At the same instant, with a general cry of despair, heard a mile off, the whole mass of Russian fugitives was seen to disappear in the black waters, and the battle of Austerlitz was won.

Gabriel saw the emperor compress his lips with an expression of pain, give a slight shudder, and then turn round and come down the tower stairs.

When he made his appearance at the lower door, his face wore its usual calm pallor, and he paced up and down without taking notice of the cuirassiers drawn up by the tower, till Gabriel dismounted, came up and stood before him, saluting:

Then the emperor stopped and looked at him in his sternest way saying:

"What! are you here again? I told you to get killed."

"Instead of which, sire, I escaped alive, but I have the honor to report that my regiment took thirty guns and lost five hundred and fifty men."

"Your regiment," repeated the emperor in a tone of inquiry. "Where is Solage?"

"Dead, sire. Killed in the charge. I have the honor to command the regiment."

The emperor compressed his lips and looked at him doubtfully. At last he said, with slow deliberate emphasis:

"Very well. I shall have to give you the cross, I suppose, and make you colonel. But you need not think to escape me. I told you to get killed, and you have not done it. Instead of that, you have forced me to promote you. Young man, you have had wonderful luck; but it will not last forever. Take your men into camp, and report to me to-night, for special orders."

Gabriel saluted and turned away. For the first time in his interviews with his idolized chief, he began to feel troubled.

There was something so coldly stern, so utterly pitiless in the marble face of the emperor, that he began to think that his trials were only beginning.

He was promoted; it was true; but every step that he took in advance seemed to lead him into fresh perils.

The emperor had said: "You need not think to escape me." Had he then really made up his mind to Gabriel's death?

Revolving all these things, he put his men into camp, and took off his cuirass. As he did so he felt something in his breast-pocket and found the paper Inez had given him two days before.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SECRET TREATY.

THAT night there was high revelry in the camps of the French round the village. Contrary to the usual custom of the emperor after a victory, the pursuit was not pushed, and a flag of truce came in from the allies, borne by Prince John of Lichtenstein, asking for a cessation of hostilities, which was granted at once.

The fact was that the position of the emperor, several hundred miles from France, in spite of his victory, was not devoid of serious danger; and he was as glad as the Austrians and the Russians to negotiate for peace.

Therefore the French troops had nothing to do but celebrate their victory, which they did with all the enthusiasm of their nation.

And in the midst of all the rejoicing, Gabriel Lenoir, pale and gloomy, sat by a bivouac fire, poring over the paper which he had received from Inez, and which he saw at once to be something of importance.

While he was still puzzling his brains over

what to do with it, an orderly brought him in a dispatch from the colonel commanding the brigade; his own old namesake.

It ran thus:

"MY DEAR BOY:—You will be interested in the order I send you. It brings luck to us both.

"Yours truly

"AUG. LENOIR,

"General of Brigade."

Appended to this was the copy of an order announcing promotions on the field.

Two paragraphs interested Gabriel at once, as Lenoir Senior had foreseen.

One announced the promotion of Colonel August Lenoir of the Death's Head Cuirassiers, to be general of brigade; the other that Major Gabriel Lenoir, "for gallant conduct in the field, was appointed colonel, *vice* Lenoir promoted."

The young man's face flushed with pride. He could not help it.

"I have done it," he said aloud. "I have staid in the regiment till I am its colonel. I have married Inez. At least I shall die a colonel."

Then he waited patiently for the summons he expected from the emperor, and it came at last in the form of a visit from a staff officer, who told him he was wanted.

He called Casse Tete; put on his best uniform; mounted the Russian charger he had taken from the colonel of cuirassiers, and rode to the headquarters of his chief, whom he found surrounded by adjutants, dictating to three men at once.

The emperor nodded to him.

"Ah, colonel good-evening. You have seen the promotions?"

"Yes, sire."

"You have earned yours, and something else too. Come here."

He took the cross of the Legion of Honor from his breast before all the officers, and put it on Gabriel's breast.

"Wear it, colonel, to remind you that it is better to obey orders than to please oneself. Are you ready for the road?"

"The road, sire?"

"The road, colonel. I wish you to go to Berlin at once, to report to General Duroc."

Gabriel looked blank. His gracious reception had made him forget for a moment the emperor's saying:

"Do you think you can escape me?"

He gulped down his disappointment.

"I am always ready to obey your majesty."

"Very good. Here are your dispatches. A word in your ear, colonel."

He led him to an inner room where they were out of earshot of the officers.

"I am about to confide in you, colonel, to see if you are worthy of pardon. General Duroc has hitherto succeeded in keeping Prussia out of the coalition against me—"

"Pardon me, sire," interrupted Gabriel, boldly. "He has done no such thing. Look here."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket the paper Inez had given him, and handed it to the emperor.

It was the draft of a secret treaty between Prussia, Austria and Russia, by which all three powers agreed to unite their forces to put down the French empire and restore the Bourbons to the throne of France.

The emperor looked at it from beginning to end with flashing eyes and compressed lips; then asked Gabriel:

"Where did you get this?"

"It was taken from the carriage which the Prince of Potsdam had just left, sire."

"How long ago?"

"The night before I had the honor to report my marriage to your majesty."

"Who gave it to you?"

"I am unable to inform your majesty."

He was very pale as he said this, and he fully expected an outburst of rage.

But the emperor did not seem angry only thoughtful, for he muttered to himself:

"Just as I thought—a woman."

He paced up and down the room several turns and at last said directly to Gabriel:

"Was it your wife?"

Gabriel made no answer.

The emperor nodded, saying:

"After all I was a young man myself, and as great a fool as the rest, in those days. Come, I will give you a chance to earn your life, Colonel Lenoir. This paper is a draft only. Find out for me whether the treaty was signed or not, and I will forgive you."

Gabriel turned on the emperor.

"Sire, to do that, I must become a spy again, and I admit that the office is an abhorrent one to me. Twice have I escaped by a miracle. The second time it was to a woman I owed my safety. That woman is my wife, and your majesty wishes me to make her a widow—to marry her to the bitter foe of France. Hear me, sire, one moment. General Duroc encouraged me to believe that your majesty was not set on this match, but was aiming to deceive the Prince of Potsdam to amuse the Court of Prussia and keep her out of the coalition. I helped Mademoiselle de Real to flee from Berlin to take refuge in the convent of our Lady of Austerlitz. I was taken a prisoner, and on

my escape found her returning in the power of the very man she had ed and who was plotting to destroy France. In only one way could I then aid her to escape. The convents were all closed. I married her to protect her. I have served your majesty faithfully in all else but this, and for this I must die. Very well; I am content to die as a soldier, but not as a spy."

The emperor listened to him quietly and watchfully. When he had finished, the first man in France went on as if the other had not spoken.

"You will proceed at once to Berlin with dispatches to General Duroc. You will be allowed to travel by post and to have such company as you deem fit."

"You will send your wife to Paris and she will resume her duties with the empress under her maiden name. If you can find out for me what I want to know I will pardon you for the past. These dispatches are secret, and give to General Duroc full discretion. When he sends you back to Paris it will be time to talk of the future. Where is your wife now? I give you my word that I will only send her to Paris if you tell me the truth; but I forbid you to try and see her on any pretext. Now, sir, where is she?"

Gabriel told him, and the emperor smiled on him more graciously.

"You have told the truth. So will I. At the moment you left her garden last night her whereabouts was reported to me. I could have sent her to Berlin this evening as soon as the road to Olmutz was open. Now fare you well, sir."

He waved his hand in dismissal, and Gabriel, hardly realizing what had happened, went slowly out, found a carriage and four horses in waiting, and was whirled away on the road to Olmutz before he had fairly collected his thoughts.

He found the road open only in the middle, where a passage had been cleared, while the ditches at the sides were still filled with Russian and Austrian wagons, broken down, dead horses and groups of teamsters cooking their suppers by small fires.

It took the carriage about two hours to pass through this wreck of a beaten army; but after that everything was open to Olmutz, and from there to Berlin the roads were open, horses plentiful and the traveling rapid.

On the evening of the second day after leaving Austerlitz he reached Berlin, drove to the French legation and found General Duroc grave and anxious.

"Well?" was the ambassador's first question, "has there been a battle?"

"Yes, general, at Austerlitz, ten or twelve miles from Brunn. We beat them badly, and by this time peace is negotiating."

Duroc uttered a sigh of relief.

"Thank God! Now we can beat these Prussians."

CHAPTER XXV.

BERLIN IN 1806.

A WINTER and summer had passed away from the time that Gabriel Lenoir went to Berlin to resume his irksome duties, before he again set foot on French soil, and in all that time he never once heard from or saw the bride from whom he had been so abruptly parted after the victory of Austerlitz.

It had been a year of restless anxiety to himself, compelled to remain in the midst of a people who hated him and whom he hated. His increased rank and consequence in the legation had indeed rid him of the old necessity of fighting duels to maintain his immunity from insult, for he could only quarrel with equals, and all the colonels in the Prussian army were old men who had past the dueling age.

But the succession of petty humiliations and slights he and Duroc were forced to undergo would have angered less patient men, and to all their private complaints to the emperor at Paris came the same response by courier:

"We are not ready to crush Prussia yet. Keep on good terms with them."

To Gabriel, who was a young man, the suspense was intolerable, and the tone of conversation in the Prussian capital exasperating.

Accustomed to consider the emperor as the first soldier in the world, and French soldiers as the cream of all warlike material, he was obliged to listen silently to all sorts of slurs from old generals who had learned the trade of war under the Great Frederick.

"You French are all very well," said one white-headed general at a dinner-party where he sat next to Gabriel; "but you have never had to fight the soldiers of the Great Fritz. You'll do well enough against undisciplined Turks and Arabs, or even against the motley levies of Austria, where they talk a dozen languages in one corps. But the German race is the conquering stock. Our ancestors overthrew the Roman Empire in its pride, and Prussia, single-handed, defied all Europe in the seven years' war. Your emperor did well not to provoke the King of Prussia. He knows that we can eat him up."

And then in January came the added triumph to the Prussians that Hanover was delivered up to them, and they bragged louder than ever.

Over and over again Gabriel came to his chief and implored him to send him back to his regiment. He could not stand the boasts of the Prussians.

Duroc only answered:

"Patience. Our time will come."

Another irritation to Gabriel lay in the fact that the Prince of Potsdam had been sent to Paris in the Prussian legation, and that he was obliged to read in the *Moniteur*—the official French paper—long accounts of grand balls at the Tuileries, in which the names of the prince and Mademoiselle Inez de Real figured together in the most conspicuous fashion.

The old prince and princess, whom he was obliged frequently to meet in public, made a point of ostentatious politeness toward him, and the princess especially took frequent opportunities to tell him long stories about "her darling boy," between whom and Gabriel she seemed to imagine a devoted friendship existed.

She told him on one occasion that she had been much displeased with the flight of mademoiselle, till she discovered that she had only fled to her German relatives in Austria, when she had attributed it to nothing but maidenly coyness and had forgiven it.

"For I was once young myself, colonel," she said, wagging her ancient head, "and now that she is back in Paris, with the good influence of Madame St. Jean, who is one of us—not a parvenu creation of that vulgar French court—she will come to her senses. No one can resist my son long, and it is not every girl who can get the chance to be a princess in a stable old family."

And to all this Gabriel had to listen, for he had received strict orders from Duroc on no account to admit his marriage.

"His majesty takes strange fancies," he told Gabriel, "and I cannot for the life of me tell whether he desires the prince to wed mademoiselle or not. You know, I suppose, that under French law your marriage is void, as lacking the consent of the man who rules France. But as I said before, I cannot tell whether he means to declare it void or not. Patience. Our time will come at last."

And it came when Gabriel was so sick at heart that he had given up expecting it.

It came one day when our hero was out on the famous walk "*Unter den Linden*," returning slowly to the legation from the palace, where he had been to carry a formal message from Duroc, congratulating the old king on recovery from an attack of rheumatism.

The gigantic grenadiers of the Guard, with their tall caps of the fashion of half a century back, had been mounting guard in front of the palace, and he had been lingering to watch their maneuvers, when a traveling carriage covered with mud dashed up to the palace full speed, and he saw the tall figure of the young Prince of Potsdam jump out and run up the steps, hastily answering the mechanical salutes of the sentries.

The young colonel's heart gave a great bound as he saw his old rival.

"Potsdam back. That means war," he thought. "He was minister at Paris. When the minister leaves his post it is the prelude to war. Thank God!"

He quickened his pace through the streets being on foot, and as he went, noticed that the people stared and scowled at him as if they had heard the news.

He knew how rumors fly in a city, and was not surprised. Other people could interpret signs as well as himself.

When he reached the legation he found a rabble in front of it hooting the tricolor, while Casse Tete, who was faithful to him as of old, stood on the upper steps looking savagely down at the Germans. They were for the most part boys and very young men, who were bellowing:

"Out with the French! Out! out!"

Gabriel stalked into the midst of this rabble and thrust them right and left like children out of his way, so that they shrunk from before him; but when he reached his orderly he heard Casse Tete say under his breath:

"They've been gathering ever since a carriage passed by at a gallop. Is there going to be war at last, my colonel?"

"Yes," said Gabriel, hurriedly. "Where is the general?"

"In his cabinet, my colonel. Shall I take a stick and drive away these curs?"

"No. Let them howl. Come in and shut the door. If they dare to break the windows, we shall know what to do."

Casse Tete obeyed with a grim smile. The old soldier began to smell powder and the odor excited him.

Gabriel went up to his chief's cabinet and found Duroc quietly writing.

He told him what had happened and the general laughed, and handed him a paper.

"It came in the last bag from Paris."

Gabriel read it.

"MY DEAR DUROC:—

"On the 26th of September we shall give Potsdam his passports. Prussia will be required to evacuate Hanover or fight. Have your baggage ready to come away on the last of September.

"TALLEYRAND."

"You see. To-day is the 29th. This Prussian has beat us by one day. We were to have gone to-morrow anyway. But what is that noise?"

A murmur in the streets growing louder every moment. Shouts and yells audible through the closed doors. Then the crashing of glass.

"The mob are breaking our windows," quoth Gabriel quietly. "They have heard the rumor of war and want to begin at once, general. Shall we fight them?"

"By no means," answered Duroc, as calmly. "Let them smash the windows and pull down the tricolor if they dare. So much the heavier will be the bill of damages."

He threw open the door and listened. The roar of the crowd outside was growing louder every minute.

"Let us go down-stairs, colonel," said the general, "and it may be as well to take our swords and call up the servants. We don't want to submit to personal harm."

When they got down-stairs they found the front door closed. Casse Tete, with a carbine in his hand, was getting the servants into line and they were all armed, but looked frightened.

They could hear the deep voice of the cuirassier scolding:

"What are you afraid of! This is nothing—only a mob of boys without arms. Even if one or two of you get hurt, you will die under the tricolor. This is nothing. Get into line there, you, Baptiste. Hold that musket up. Do you want to shoot your comrades?"

Then, as Duroc came down, he saluted and grumbled on:

"Eh, general, such a lot of conscripts! But they'll fight, for all that. Shall we open the doors and charge the rabble?"

Bang! bang! smash! crash!

A regular volley of stones rattled in at the waiting-room windows, followed by a yell from the mob outside.

"Out with the French! Drive them out!" was the shout outside.

Then General Duroc turned to Gabriel:

"Do as you please," he said. "I am not responsible if it happens when I am up-stairs. But, remember, if you give them a lesson, let it be sharp."

He turned away and walked up-stairs as another volley battered against the door and Gabriel said to Casse Tete:

"Open the doors and let them have it."

Casse Tete, looking as grim as if he were about to charge a battery, strode to the doors, unlocked them and threw them wide open.

Then they saw the cowardly crowd at the opposite side of the street, and a dead silence fell on the mob as they beheld the servants of the legation armed with muskets.

Gabriel walked out on the steps and waved his hand, crying in German:

"Clear this street at once. This is the French legation and we shall fire if you throw another stone."

A shout came back from the rear of the crowd, but those in front began to push outwardly and run away.

The servants of the legation came out on the steps and Gabriel cried:

"Cock your muskets. Fire if a stone is thrown."

The edges of the crowd began to melt away and the people to run up the street just as a troop of Red Hussars trotted round the corner and came rapidly up.

The moment the German rowdies saw the soldiers they dispersed, and then Gabriel saw that the hussars surrounded a close carriage which drove up and halted. Out sprang the Prince of Potsdam, tall, trim, handsome and brilliantly uniformed with a smile of triumph on his face.

He pretended not to recognize Gabriel, but said to him haughtily:

"Where is the ambassador. I bear him the ultimatum of the king."

"I am secretary of the legation," said Gabriel stiffly. "I will take your papers, sir."

Potsdam waved him aside.

"I come from the King of Prussia and I deal only with the ambassador."

Gabriel planted himself in front.

"I represent the emperor of the French and I want your papers."

"Very well, sir."

The prince with a covert haughty smile that exasperated Gabriel—he knew not why—handed him an envelope.

"I will see whether the ambassador will receive you," quoth Lenoir coldly. "Will you enter the reception-room? If it is not as comfortable as it was you may thank your friends. They have just broken our windows."

"That is not all that will be broken," was the rude answer. "In three months from now, monsieur, we will be in Paris."

Gabriel smiled sarcastically.

"Perhaps. If so we always treat our prisoners well."

He turned away and took the letter to Duroc who opened it, glanced over it and said gayly:

"At last. I thought they would do it. It is an ultimatum. We are to evacuate Prussia and apologize for violating Prussian territory last year or take our passports. Where is this messenger, colonel?"

"It is the Prince of Potsdam."

"Indeed? Then they mean business."

He went down-stairs and found the prince impatiently striding up and down the reception-room waiting.

"Well, monsieur," he said sharply; "is your answer ready?"

"I is, prince. Have you our passports with you?"

The Prussian's face lighted up eagerly as he pulled from his belt the papers.

"Here they are, monsieur. Then I am to tell the king you mean war?"

"Decidedly, prince."

He took the passports and added:

"I suppose you see what your mob has done, to the legation. You will have to pay for that also."

"We shall be ready, monsieur, when we have taught your emperor that the soldiers of Prussia are not Russians or Austrians by any means."

Then he turned to Gabriel and addressed him directly with a sly malicious triumph that the young man was at a loss to account for. It was so unlike the demeanor of the prince when they had last met.

The man seemed to have changed his nature and looked as haughty as when Gabriel had first seen him at the Pavilion of Diana.

"Monsieur," he said, "I learn that to you I owe a special debt above all Frenchmen. You have saved me from marrying a girl of whom it is only necessary to say that my family repudiate her."

Gabriel turned as white as a sheet and his eyes blazed as he asked hoarsely:

"To whom do you refer?"

"To Mademoiselle Inez de—"

He got no further when Gabriel's glove smote him across the face as the cuirassier hissed out:

"Liar and coward. I will teach you to respect her better when we meet next on the field of battle."

"So be it," said the prince with a ghastly smile. "I will kill you then."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A GORGEOUS GENERAL.

In the very midst of the German Confederation, half-way between the North Sea and the Alps, lies the forest of Thuringia.

It covers the whole stretch of country between the Rhine and the Elbe with the Erz Gebirge mountains on the south and the Kingdom of Prussia proper on the north, with a network of small rivers traversing it and running into the Main, the Weser and the Elbe.

The Main, as every one knows flows into the Rhine below Frankfurt at Mainz or Mayence; the Weser and the Elbe run into the North Sea through Hanover. At the southern part of the forest, near the Erz Gebirge mountains, all these rivers are small streams, but further on in the Kingdom of Hanover they are only passable by bridges.

One week after Gabriel Lenoir, in the French Legation at Berlin, struck the Prince of Potsdam in the face with his glove, the defiles of the forest of Thuringia echoed to the rumble of artillery, the steady clattering march of miles on miles of cavalry and the buzz of conversation in the columns of infantry while long strings of baggage-wagons stretched from the foot of the mountains for more than a day's march to the north-east.

The French were entering the forest from the borders of Bavaria.

On the other side of the vast stretch of woods and ravines, the Prussians were rapidly pushing forward toward the French frontier at Coblenz, and had already got as far as Eisenach, with their forces scattered over the country in all directions, feeling about for the French, whom they expected by the direct road from the west.

In the midst of this forest of Thuringia ran, at the time of our story, the boundaries of half a dozen petty duchies, grand duchies, margravates, landgravates, and all those minute divisions which then characterized the German Confederation and which had come down from the Feudal States of the Middle Ages.

In peace-time, every little State had its army, its police, its custom-houses, its passports; but in the storm of war which broke over Germany in 1806 all these distinctions vanished.

The giants, Austria, Prussia and France, marched where they pleased over the boundaries of these principalities.

Thus it happened that a regiment of French cuirassiers, pushing out from the left through the forest toward Gotha found itself confronted at that place by the whole army of the duchy of Saxe Coburg Gotha, consisting of twenty-five gorgeous hussars, a company of infantry in

white and gold and the giants in silver helmets and cuirasses, whose leader in the uniform of a general, came riding down to the borders of the little stream that separated him from the French and observed to the French colonel:

"We are very sorry to be disobliging to you, monsieur, but this is the territory of his serene highness, the Prince of Potsdam, who is also hereditary Grand Duke of the Duchy of Saxe Coburg Gotha, and if you persist in the attempt we shall be compelled to fire on you."

The colonel of the French cuirassiers was a powerfully built, but very young man, with a fair face and delicate blonde mustache.

His uniform was singularly plain and dark without a touch of gold, save in the cross of the Legion of Honor which he wore at his breast; and his followers, officers and men, were equally plain and somber.

It was noticeable too that he was the only fair man in the command, all the rest being swarthy, black-mustached giants on big black horses.

The colonel looked pale and gloomy; but his face lighted up as the other spoke and he asked with great civility:

"And who, may I ask, monsieur, are you?"

"I am the field-marshal, Herzog [Duke] Albrecht von Wildhausen, of Saxe-Gotha, generalissimo of the forces of his serene highness," was the pompous answer in a tone of great pride.

"And where is his serene highness?" asked the colonel, in the same courteous tone.

"At Eisenach, in command of the cavalry of the first army."

"The first army?" asked the colonel. "Who commands it?"

"His highness, Prince Hohenlohe, equerry-in-chief to the king."

"And you are sure he is at Eisenach?"

The gorgeous general considered.

"Well, no. He was there yesterday. To-day he may be near Coblenz. The fact is, colonel, that our people are going to take Paris this time, so you may as well go back."

"Our people?" echoed the French colonel.

"Are you a Prussian then?"

The general drew himself up.

"No, sir. I am a Saxe Coburg Gotha man on my sovereign's land."

The young colonel burst out laughing.

"Very well, then. What are you going to do if I advance. I have eight hundred cuirassiers here and you have not a hundred and fifty, all told."

"I shall trust to your sense of fair play to send only equal numbers against us at a time. When we have beaten the first lot you can send another, and so on."

The pompous general seemed to be in earnest with his innocent proposition, and Gabriel Lenoir—for he it was—had orders only to reconnoiter in that direction. He saw that the other was not a practical soldier, and it immediately struck our young colonel that he might gain information by humoring his fantasies for awhile.

"I have a fairer plan than that," he said to the general. "Suppose I send a single squadron of my men out in your rear till they sight the Prussian forces. Will you let them pass? In the mean time, we can have a little tournament here, all to ourselves, and decide the relative merits of our systems of training. Have you ever been in action, general?"

The general blushed as he admitted he had not; but added that he had studied the works of the Great Frederick, and had trained his army on the principles which had placed Prussia at the head of all Europe.

He objected to letting any French soldiers cross the stream, but had no objection to their maneuvering on the further bank.

Gabriel saw that he had parleyed long enough and that the time for action had come. With all his pomposity the General Duke of Wildhausen was gaining time, and he had noticed a hussar officer ride off to the rear while the conversation was progressing.

He gave the signal for advance, and the squadrons behind him which had been deploying out of sight while he was talking to the general, came crashing through the woods at a slow trot, swept over the stream in imposing force, and lo! the infantry of Saxe Coburg Gotha, in their white and gold uniforms, stood staring at them in amazement, while the Black Cuirassiers came tramping all round them.

Then the gorgeous general, very red in the face, galloped up to his men, shouting:

"Why didn't you fire at them as they crossed?"

The captain, a white-headed veteran with a pigtail, saluted stiffly:

"We had no orders, general. Besides, we are surrounded. The proper thing to do is to surrender ourselves. The cavalry can cut their way out, but we are not cavalry."

Gabriel heard the colloquy, and could hardly help roaring with laughter. All the officers and men of the usually solemn Death's Heads were grinning at the confusion of the noble army of Saxe Coburg Gotha, and in the midst of it all the valiant Duke of Wildhausen drew his sword, shouted to the hussars, "Follow me!"

and galloped off as hard as he could tear on the road to Eisenach with the light horsemen.

Gabriel detached a squadron to follow him slowly at a trot, for he felt ashamed to slaughter such a ridiculously small force of men, and then spread out his men on all the roads in the vicinity to examine the country.

Half an hour later he was startled by the intelligence that a heavy column of Prussian cavalry with guns was moving rapidly toward him, and he drew in his troops, sent them back on the road to the main army at Baruth, from which he was distant about ten hours' march, and resolved to stay himself to the last moment to see what was to be seen.

He was moved to this determination by the fact that both armies were as yet feeling for each other, and it was important for him to find out the force and location of the enemy if possible, without letting them know his own resources.

He was mounted on the Russian Orloff trotter which he knew to be able to distance any heavy horse in Germany, while the faithful Casse Tete, on a similar animal was close in attendance on him.

As soon as he had seen his column off on the road to Baruth, he trotted out himself in the direction which the valiant Duke of Wildhausen had taken, and soon topped a hill from which he could look over a broad expanse of cultivated country stretching from the forest toward Cassel.

In the midst of this country, coming along between green lanes, and still two miles off, was a long glittering string of horsemen stretching for about another two miles.

He looked at them carefully then turned to Casse Tete:

"How many of them should you say there are?" he asked his faithful follower.

"About six hundred, my colonel. They are riding by twos. But they have a gun with them. See, there are our friends the hussars in the advance coming in skirmishing order. They think we are still where they left us."

"Do you think there are any more behind them, Casse Tete?"

"No, my colonel. We could give them a fine beating now, if it were not against orders."

"It is never against orders to destroy a foe, Casse Tete, but it would draw the attention of the enemy to this part of the country."

Casse Tete looked longingly at the cavalry, and could not help murmuring:

"Ah, how we could beat those greenhorns. See, my colonel, they have actually a carriage in the middle of the soldiers. It must be some prince they have with them who wishes to make war in style."

Gabriel unslung his field-glass and leveled it on the column. He could indeed see the outline of a carriage above the hedge-rows, and it occurred to him that this carriage might contain some person of importance, as Casse Tete had suggested.

Hesitating for a little while, he at last made up his mind to attack this luxurious warrior, in the hope that by so doing he might acquire some information of value to the army.

He had joined his regiment three days before at Coblenz, where Duroc had left him to go to Paris, and he was still brooding over the words of the Prince of Potsdam:

"*You have saved me from marrying a girl of whom it is only necessary to say that my family repudiate her.*"

What did the villain mean? His mien had been one of triumphant malice, and for the first time in their acquaintance he did not seem to be afraid of Gabriel. Had the prince found out his marriage, and, if so what made him so triumphant over it?

Thinking over these things till his head reeled with anxiety over possible harm to Inez, he was hardly in a fit condition to command troops in a campaign; but as he watched that lonely carriage, so out of place in the midst of marching soldiers, a strange fancy came into his head.

He said to himself:

"What if the Prince of Potsdam himself be in that carriage? If he be my chance may have come, and I will take it."

He turned to Casse Tete.

"Ride back at a trot to the regiment, and bring them round here through the woods. We will give them a trial."

Casse Tete, his grim face lighting up with glee, saluted and rode off as fast as his horse could trot, while Gabriel from his commanding eminence, watched the slow advance of his foes.

Through the glass he could see that they wore the uniform of the Prussian Cuirassiers of the Guard, and he counted the files till he saw that they numbered about as many men as he had himself, with the addition of the very ornamental troop of hussars of Saxe Coburg Gotha, in their white and gold uniforms laced and furred in extravagant style.

The position he had taken was off the road, sheltered from view by a heavy growth of fir-trees, and he could watch them at his ease as they wound along the lane in unsuspecting security.

As they neared the place where the road crossed the little stream where he had met the

noble army of Gotha he saw them halt and deploy in line, while the hussars began to fire into the woods in front, in the most brilliant style, and the two cannons in the rear were brought up to open on the wood.

At the same time the cuirassiers spread out into a line, and halted in rear of the guns. It was obvious they thought the Death's Heads still in the wood in front.

A smile of contempt curled the young man's lip as he saw this cautious advance, and he turned his attention to the carriage.

It had stopped in the lane, and as he looked through the glass more intently, he saw that some one was getting out, while an orderly held a horse in front.

Then he uttered a low curse as he shut up the glass. He had seen his foeman. It was the Prince of Potsdam himself.

He looked round and listened in vain for the coming of his own men. He wished now he had not sent them away.

Then, to while away the time, he watched the figure of the prince through the glass, and saw him speak to some one in the carriage.

A woman's face appeared at the window, the face of his own wife!

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DISCOVERY.

THE unhappy young husband dropped the glass he was holding to the earth with a low cry as he made this discovery and trembled all over with rage.

He had seen Inez before in the power of that man, and had had no fears. What then was it now that caused him to gnaw his lip till it bled as he looked down?

It was the insulting words of the prince at Berlin:

"*You have saved me from marrying her!*" And yet here was Inez de Real, his own wife, in the same carriage with that man.

It was lucky for Gabriel that he was alone then, for, had others been present, they would have seen him break down.

But after the first spasm of jealous rage had passed over he lifted his head, and a ghastly smile lighted up his face.

He heard his men coming.

The dull clank, clank, clank, of scabbard on stirrup as they came, was the sweetest of music to his ears.

There lay his foeman, not half a mile below him, his flank in full view, while the terrible Death's Head Cuirassiers were coming up at a trot over the soft carpet of pine cones behind him to his aid.

He turned his horse and galloped back.

"Not a loud order," he said, hurriedly, to the leading captain. "Spread out in two lines. Do everything by signs."

The veterans needed no second bidding. They remembered their young colonel at the field of Austerlitz, and since that time the ranks had been filled up with new men who had heard the most marvelous tales from the veterans about the white colonel of the Black Death's Heads.

They were prouder of him now than they had been of Lenoir Senior.

"He can't help his eyes and hair," they would say. "The good God gave him them. But he has done all he could to be worthy of the Death's Heads. He has taken the name of Lenoir, and he is a cuirassier to the core."

So the grim heroes of Austerlitz spread out silently to either flank, and when they emerged from the woods in line and went sweeping down at a trot on the Prussians not a sound was uttered.

They had actually got nearly a hundred yards out of the woods before they were fully noticed below, and then came a wild scene of confusion as the Prussian officers shrieked out orders to their men and began to wheel their squadrons to form line in the new direction.

Then Gabriel Lenoir waved his sword, pointed to the confused mass of plunging horsemen, and cried out:

"After me, Death's Heads!"

A deep-toned roar of triumph came from under those black mustaches, the sable chargers quickened their trot to a slashing pace, and the whole line, without a swerve or break in its magnificent order, swept down on the Prussians and drove them in headlong rout from the field.

As for Gabriel Lenoir, he had ridden straight for where he had seen the Prince of Potsdam; but in the confusion he missed him, and, when he at last came to the entrance of the lane, there stood the carriage alone, a mob of Prussian horsemen galloping madly away down the lane, others scattered over the field in all directions, but still no prince to be seen.

He dashed up to the carriage and shouted out to the terrified driver:

"Who is in this carriage?"

"Nobody, so please your highness, but two ladies."

"Two ladies!"

He was off his horse in a moment, and, at the carriage window, was met by the wrinkled face of Madame la Marquise de Saint Jean, who simpered out:

"Why, it is Colonel Lenoir himself. Oh, how happy I am to see you?"

"Who is in the carriage with you?" demanded Gabriel, slowly, not noticing her politeness.

"In the carriage? Why, of course you must know Mademoiselle de Real. You remember her, colonel?"

"What is she doing here?" pursued Gabriel, as sternly as before.

His heart was growing more bitter than ever as he saw Inez herself did not look out to see him.

"What is she doing here?" tittered the old lady. "Well, really, colonel, that is a most singular question. I know it is war time; but by what right do you ask such a question? We are ladies, sir, not used to the manners of the barrack-room."

Gabriel smiled bitterly. He saw that the old marquise had been into some plot against him, and was afraid of its being discovered, but he was only thinking of Inez in that carriage.

"You ask by what right I ask a question of her, madame," he said. "If you know anything, you know that the lady is my wife. What is she doing in a carriage with the Prince of Potsdam?"

"Oh, no, not with the Prince of Potsdam," the old lady replied, sweetly—"with me, with me, monsieur. No one will dare associate any impropriety with her name under my protection, I hope. We have traveled a few miles under the escort of his highness, but that is all, I assure you."

"He was in the carriage not half an hour ago," said Gabriel. "I saw him through a glass from the top of that hill, in plain sight. I saw my wife put her head out of the carriage. Where is she? Is she afraid to come out and look me in the face?"

He was pale with passion now, and his words were directed, not to the marquise, but at her he deemed the faithless Inez, cowering inside the carriage.

They had their effect.

A pale, beautiful face made its appearance, and two mournful dark eyes looked out at him, while their owner said sadly:

"Oh, monsieur, have I deserved this? I came in search of you."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JEALOUSY.

BUT Gabriel was too angry and jealous to listen to the voice of his heart pleading powerfully for Inez. He had seen her in the same carriage with a man she had once professed to hate, and from whom he had saved her.

She was accompanied by the Marquise de Saint Jean, of whom the old Princess of Potsdam had said significantly: "*She is one of us,*" and on whom she had expressed her reliance to bring Inez "*to her senses*"—that is to induce her to marry the prince. His eyes met those of Inez coldly, and he said, in a sarcastic way:

"You came in search of me, you say. It was a strange road you took, through the Prussian lines. It is plain, madame, that you regret the romance of the village church, and prefer the luxury of a palace to the quarters of a simple colonel. Be it so. You are free to depart to Berlin, if you wish."

Inez burst into tears. She seemed to be shocked, angry, ashamed, and burst out:

"How can you be so cruel? I don't wish to go to Berlin."

"Then, madame, in the name of honor, I demand that you return to Paris at once," said Gabriel sternly. "Is this a place for a lady, in the midst of the armies in campaign? Return at once."

"I am ready, monsieur," she answered, her face flushing deeply and resentfully. "You shall not have cause to reproach me again for my anxiety, I can assure you."

She sunk back in the carriage, and the marquise, who had been looking pale and anxious during the whole colloquy, interposed nervously:

"But how can we get back to Paris? The roads are full of the enemy, all the way to Cassel."

"I will send an escort with you, and you shall go through our lines, not those of our enemies," was Gabriel's stern reply.

Then he called up Casse Tete and gave him directions to accompany the carriage on the road to Wurtzburg and not to leave it till it had crossed the French frontier.

"After that," he said pointedly to Inez, "I do not claim to control your movements as a Frenchwoman; but when the campaign is over, if I return alive, I shall do myself the honor of waiting on her majesty the Empress of the French, if she will grant me an audience, to ask after the health of—Mademoiselle de Real."

She cast on him a glance in which pride and anger seemed to be struggling with some other feeling, and replied:

"Very well, monsieur. You may not find the lady of whom you speak in Paris, and then you may be sorry for your words."

"So be it," he said haughtily.

Then he remounted his horse and sat in the midst of a field, while the carriage moved off

on the back road, and while his captains were rearranging the disordered squadrons.

He did not know that Inez was watching him through the window as long as the carriage remained in sight, and that, when it at last turned into the wood, she sunk into a corner, murmuring:

"Oh, if he only knew!"

But he was too full of bitter jealous anger to think otherwise of Inez but as faithless to him; and his whole soul seemed now absorbed in one desire, to find and kill the Prince of Potsdam.

As soon as his men had been gathered up again, he detached a squadron at the trot after the fleeing enemy, hoping to find them rallied somewhere, and followed with the whole regiment, not regarding the danger he ran, so long as he came up with his enemy and met him man to man.

But, though they pushed on for three hours, they found no trace of a halt, while the fragments of weapons and accouterments that strewed the road showed that the enemy were very much demoralized by their surprise; and it was late in the afternoon when he at last came in full view of them at Eisenach.

And then what a sight he saw!

Instead of a single regiment of cuirassiers, as he expected, there was a large force of infantry, cavalry and artillery, drawn up in line of battle, and apparently awaiting an attack.

He had run right into the presence of the first Prussian army, forty thousand strong, with a handful of men. Had he ventured such an exploit with the Austrians, they would have cut him off to a certainty.

But these Prussians, he noticed, seemed like wooden soldiers in their stiffness and immobility; and when he sent all his men out to the right and left, behind the shelter of a hill, and caused them to make their appearance suddenly in a skirmish line three miles long, the Prussian guns opened a furious cannonade on the woods and fields in front, thinking that the whole French army was coming down on them.

No damage was done to anything but the trees and banks, and as soon as our hero had accomplished his purpose, to impress the enemy with a false belief, he withdrew his men.

Not before he had seen, through the glass, a courier dashing wildly on the road to Weimar, to carry the news of the supposed French attack.

Then he collected his men and rode back at a rapid pace toward the place he had left the day before, satisfied that the Prussians were walking blindly into the trap prepared for them by the genius of the Emperor of the French.

This trap was nothing less than to induce them to advance toward the French frontier at Coblenz and leave open the roads to Berlin, while the French army really advanced from Bavaria on the south and cut in between the Prussians and their capital, at or about the village of Jena.

And Gabriel Lenoir, with the Death's Head Cuirassiers, was part of the bait set to draw the Prussians forward.

The sun set before he had gone ten miles on his road back to the army; but the full moon allowed him to see the way, and he traveled all night.

In the early morning they met the French cavalry outposts, in the midst of the forest of Thuringia, and Gabriel Lenoir was able to report to no less a person than Marshal Murat, now appointed Grand Duke of Berg, and chief of all the cavalry of the French army.

The marshal received him much more graciously than he had done on a former occasion, when Gabriel was a simple captain, unpopular in his regiment, and interfering, as the haughty "Beau Sabreur" had thought, with other people's business.

He listened to his story; sent off news to the emperor of what had happened, and told Gabriel to put his men into camp and rest the horses.

"We shall do nothing more for a day or two, colonel," he said. "It is time the infantry did something now. We have found the enemy. Let them get ready to beat him, and we'll finish him off neatly."

So Gabriel went into camp in a grand forest of ancient oaks and beeches, where the tired horses munched their oats and the cuirassiers polished up their weapons.

Late that evening Casse Tete rode in, on a horse nearly broken down from rapid work, and reported that he had left madame on French territory.

CHAPTER XXIX.

GOSSIP.

SEVERAL more days followed of apparently aimless marching and countermarching in the defiles of the forest of Thuringia, during which no one in the French army, outside the chiefs, knew what was going on; and on the 13th of October, 1806, the Death's Head Cuirassiers found themselves, with the rest of the heavy cavalry of the Imperial Guard, marching for Jena in the midst of hundreds of conflicting rumors.

It was on this day that Gabriel Lenoir, while on the march, fell into conversation with a staff officer, who brought him an order, and whom he had known while at Berlin, a year before, the said officer having come there with dispatches.

This young man's name was Count Delaroché, and he belonged to an old royalist family.

He was a gay young fellow, full of fun and frolic, fond of pleasure, adoring Paris, with sentimental leanings toward the old nobility, but enthusiastic in praise of the way the emperor was carrying forward the glory of France.

He had a special admiration for the Grand Duke of Berg, on whose staff he was serving.

"Ah!" he said to Gabriel, as they rode along, "it is all very well for you Red Republicans to say there is nothing in the old blood and the old traditions; but see what they have made of him. He is a veritable knight of romance."

"And yet only the son of an inn-keeper," observed Gabriel; for he felt in that bitter humor when he loved to contradict every one in his own heart-soreness as to Inez. "I am told that he carries the manners of the camp into court, Delaroché."

Delaroché retorted indignantly:

"You are misinformed. It is true I am one of the old kind, but I must admit that never, even at the court of Louis the Martyr, have I seen such perfect breeding as at the Tuileries under our emperor. Ah, Lenoir, you should see the ladies of her majesty. Such angelic beauty, such perfect grace! I declare to you that I have lost my heart a dozen times over to each of them individually."

Gabriel began to take an interest in the conversation now, and asked:

"Were you much in Paris last winter?"

"Much in Paris! I should say so. Why, his highness, the Grand Duke of Berg, was Governor of Paris, and my duties took me to the palace every day."

"Then you saw all the empress's ladies pretty frequently?"

"I should say I did; and, as I said, I lost my heart to all, one after the other. But they only laughed at me. A poor count, with nothing but an old name and his sword, does not attract them. It takes a millionaire or a prince, even if he's only a cursed Prussian."

"A Prussian? Then there was—"

"Yes, a Prussian prince of the blood—a fellow called the Prince of Potsdam. They were all wild over him, and I swear I never could see anything in the fellow."

"I heard there was some idea of his marrying a French lady," observed the young colonel, with affected carelessness.

"Oh, you mean Mademoiselle de Real. Yes, I heard about that, but I don't believe a word of it. Look out, colonel, we're running on the heels of the Third. We'd better halt and let the column open."

Gabriel slackened the pace of his horse, which he had allowed to press on in the excitement of his questions, and continued:

"You said you did not believe it. May I ask why not? I heard from very good authority that they were to make a match."

"I don't believe it," repeated Delaroché, obstinately. "Any one could see that she hated the Prussian. I did hear a story—but never mind that. I don't want to repeat court gossip. And after all, it only came from that old St. Jean."

Gabriel turned cold and hot as he rode. What secret was in the air? As gently as he could, without rousing his companion's suspicions, he tried to lead the conversation back.

"Old St. Jean? You mean the marquise, I suppose."

"Yes, I do. She's an old cat. I ought to know her, for she's a great aunt of mine."

"And she spreads scandalous stories, I suppose, about all the ladies?"

"No, no, not quite so bad. Give the devil his due. Old St. Jean is a regular old matchmaker and I believe had set her mind on making that poor girl marry the Prussian. You know she held the office of mistress of the robes, and had a great deal of control over the maids of honor."

"Yes, and what of it?"

"Well, you know she could do a great deal in excusing them from duty or putting them on at different times, to suit her own purposes."

"I don't understand—"

"I mean—confound it, Lenoir—she could throw them into the way of any lover she fancied, easily enough. If she wanted to encourage a man, she could give him a hint as to who would wait on the empress at such a time, and tell him to be there."

"And she thus threw this prince—"

"Into constant communication with Mademoiselle de Real. I ought to know it, because I was madly in love with her myself once, and whenever I tried to get a chance to speak to her, there was that confounded Prussian at her elbow, and my gracious aunt on guard, ready to carry off intruders. I would have tried picking a quarrel with him, but, confound it, he was an ambassador, and sacred on that account. And besides, they say the fellow fences confoundedly well. He was taking lessons from

St. George and the Mameluke Roustan every morning all the time he was in Paris."

"Indeed?"

Gabriel began to think to himself that he saw a reason for the prince's show of courage when they met at Berlin. He fancied doubtless that he could beat Lenoir now, after his lessons.

The young cuirassier ground his teeth as he thought of the prospect of a fight.

"I'll show him!" he muttered, "when the old Death's Heads charge whether his lessons will stand him in stead."

Then he continued his questions.

"And he was constantly with mademoiselle? Was that what the marquise made her story about?"

"No, no. In fact, Lenoir, I don't like to speak of it to any one. I'm convinced that it was a foul slander. But you won't repeat it?"

"Not to a living soul."

"Well, she told me once, when I complained of her never giving me a chance to speak to the young lady; that there was an old attachment between mademoiselle and the prince, but that some beggarly French officer—a fortune-hunter—had once taken advantage of the young lady, when he had her in his power, and had forced her to marry him. That the emperor wished to annul the marriage and punish this officer, but that the prince had claimed the right to punish him by his own hand in a duel, and that it was understood between mademoiselle and this Prussian, that, as soon as the prince had killed this Frenchman, he was to marry the lady."

"And did the marquise say that the lady consented to this scheme?"

"Certainly. She said that the poor girl hated her legal husband, and longed to be rid of him."

"And what said you to all of this?" asked the young cuirassier in a low tone.

"I told her that I didn't believe that a Frenchwoman would want to marry the murderer of her husband, and that if ever I met him, I would tell him of this fine plot and recommend him to keep in his hand, with the foils."

Gabriel uttered a harsh laugh.

"A good answer, Delaroché. By all the gods, there are some honest men left, even in our court. And you think that this poor husband was not altogether to blame; that he has some rights that even the emperor is bound to respect?"

"My faith, why not? But that is all past and gone now. We are at war, thank Heaven, with these Prussians, at last, and if I get a chance at that prince, I'll try whether a pistol-shot on the field won't spoil his fencing. I don't know the husband; but it is enough for me that he is French, and the other a Prussian. I am for my own country, all the time."

"But this man, you say, forced an unwilling girl to marry him and deserves no pity," said Gabriel rather bitterly.

"As for that I have only my aunt's word, and she may have wanted to frighten me off. It may be all a lie. Anyway, I am for the poor husband. Ah, I see they are massing for a halt. Good-by, Lenoir. I'm wanted."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE NIGHT BEFORE JENA.

AS young Delaroché rode away, he left Gabriel Lenoir in a fever of suppressed rage and excitement. So his wife was actually plotting his death with this Prussian, from whom he had saved her just a year before.

He had given her all he had, his unstained name, as a shield against the persecutions even of the Emperor of the French; had never approached her save with the most profound respect; and yet now she had turned against him in his absence, had listened to the tempter, who had rank and wealth to offer, and was deliberately counting on his death, to enable her to marry again—this time "brilliantly," as the world would call it.

"Out on her hypocrisy!" he muttered, as he sat on his horse, moodily watching the men massing for a halt, and gnawing his mustache. "She pretended to be coming to look for me, with that old marquise to play propriety, and she must needs travel through the Prussian lines under the escort of the man who has been practicing in secret to take my life. But I will disappoint all their fine plans. I will not be killed. If I would not do it to oblige the emperor, I will not do it to please the marquise and any empty-headed wife. I will kill this fellow; and when he is dead, then I will say to her: 'You would not have me when you could. Now I consent that our marriage be annulled. You are no wife of mine.'"

Revolving all these plans of revenge, he did not notice that the halted masses of cavalry were moving on again, as the road in front became clear, and he was awakened from his bitter reverie by the respectful cough of Casse Tete, who observed, with his usual freedom, to his old master:

"The Third have moved out, my colonel, and the orders are to walk the horses."

Gabriel started and gave the order to move

on; but he felt at that moment that he would have given worlds to have a single friend to whom he could confide some of his griefs.

But there was no one. He had been alone in the regiment once because he was the only blonde there; now he was isolated by the respect paid to his rank.

The only approach to intimacy that he had ever had with any one had been with the rough but faithful Casse Tete, and he could only speak to him confidentially when they were alone.

So the day of weary delays, marches and halts, on narrow muddy roads, to allow for the lagging of artillery and wagons in front, passed slowly away, and as the sun set, the young man began to be aware that distant fighting was going on, at several points of the compass.

The deep sullen booming of guns was to be heard every few minutes, and the sound roused in him a sort of fierce joy.

"I shall find him somewhere," was all he thought of now. The fate of the campaign, the glories of the French arms, the chances of distinction to himself had all become as nothing to the one idea:

"I shall meet him now."

It was dark before they halted, and the cavalry bivouacked in a dense mass by the banks of the little river Saale, under the shadow of some towering heights known as the Landgrafenberg.

Then, as the fires were lighted and the stars shone out above, Gabriel Lenoir became aware for the first time that they had joined the whole mass of the French army, and that the enemy were on the other side of the Landgrafenberg.

As far as he could see, all round, the sky was red with the reflection of the watch-fires, and the buzz of the two armies was plainly audible, one to the other.

As soon as he had seen to his routine duties, the young colonel wrapped himself in his cloak and threw himself on the ground by a fire which Casse Tete had lighted in a recess of the banks of the Saale, where they were sheltered from view.

The faithful fellow had noticed his master's silence and abstraction during the day's march, and had made a shrewd guess at the cause of it, the more so because, riding as orderly behind the colonel, he had heard most of the conversation between Gabriel and Delaroche.

Besides hearing it, he had formed his opinion on it, an opinion he kept to himself till they were alone.

Then when he had built up a roaring blaze and brought his master his supper—a cold fowl he had foraged from a house on the way, with a bottle of Rhine wine—he coughed as a preliminary to confidence, and observed:

"Your honor's supper is ready."

"I can not eat to-night," said Gabriel, in a weary tone. "Leave me alone, Casse Tete. I want to think."

Casse Tete coughed again.

"Thinking, on the eve of a battle, is bad for the health, my colonel. Excuse me. I am an older soldier than your honor, and your honor all us me to speak now and then."

"Yes, yes. Go on, Casse Tete."

But the colonel leaned his chin on his hands, and gazed into the fire as if his thoughts were far away.

Casse Tete coughed a third time.

"If I were in your honor's place, I would pick the last bones of this fowl and drink every drop of this wine. It is a sure sign that a man is going to get killed, if he mopes and does not eat, the night before an affair."

"Perhaps it would be the best thing that could happen, Casse Tete," said the colonel, listlessly. "I've nothing to live for."

Casse Tete held up his hands in wonder.

"Nothing to live for? Why, your honor is the colonel of the finest regiment in the world. Only think, if you were killed? Why, the Death's Heads would not know themselves, with a colonel who was not named Lenoir! It would break their hearts! To have had two Lenoirs for colonels, and to see one of them a general of division now, and then to have no Lenoir at all. They would all run away, the next fight, my colonel, and the emperor would have to break up the regiment."

Gabriel smiled faintly at the earnestness of his follower.

"You think too much of my influence, Casse Tete. The Death's Heads were a regiment of picked men before I came, and they will remain the same after I have gone. We must all expect to go some day, you know. It is a soldier's lot to face death, my friend."

"Yes, my colonel, to face death. That's understood. But not on an empty stomach, not like a silly lamb, that lets them cut its throat, and never so much as says bah."

"I can assure you, Casse Tete, I don't intend to let any one cut my throat without fighting."

"That goes without saying, my colonel. You are Colonel Lenoir of the Death's Heads, and we of our kind prefer killing to being killed. But you'll need a strong arm to-morrow, my colonel, and to keep up your strength you need this chicken and wine. It's poor sour stuff to

be sure, not like our Burgundy; but it will make a man drunk for all that."

"But I don't want to be made drunk."

"That goes without saying. The colonel of the Death's Heads can always carry his wine like a gentleman. But if your honor will permit a liberty to an old soldier—"

Casse Tete hesitated.

"Well, Casse Tete, what is it?"

"Then I would say that, if I were your honor, I would not give that old cat the pleasure of dancing over my grave."

Gabriel started violently. The cuirassier had spoken with a bitter vehemence that there was no mistaking.

"What do you mean? What old cat?"

"I mean that old woman that came along with madame, my colonel, and that ought to be drummed out of camp for trying to excite a mutiny against the commanding officer."

Gabriel looked at him in surprise. The veteran had got very red in the face, and was waving the bottle in one hand and the tin plate which held the cold fowl in the other, at the imminent risk of dropping the meat out of the platter.

"If you're going to play tragedy," said the colonel, with a slight smile at the ludicrous picture, "you'd better put down the provisions, Casse Tete."

"Certainly, my colonel. Here they are. Yes, that is the knife. Now do eat, for the sake of poor old Casse Tete, who would have nowhere to go if he lost his colonel. And then that confounded Stropade he would grin and say: 'Had to come back to the ranks, didn't you, Casse Tete? No Colonel Blancbec to pet you now?' Oh, my colonel, eat it all up, and pick the bones, or I shall think you're sure to be killed to-morrow."

The old cuirassier was nearly blubbering as he finished, and Gabriel said:

"Well, well, I'll eat it. But go on to tell me what you were saying."

Casse Tete brightened up at once. He saw on his colonel's face an angry, resolute expression superseding the gloomy looks of the day, and the veteran laughed within himself as he saw the unconsciously savage air with which the young officer dissected the chicken. In fact, Gabriel was grinding his teeth over the bones, thinking of revenge, and every gulp of wine he took made him feel more angry.

"Well my colonel," said Casse Tete, slowly, "it's not much I have to tell; and I must ask your honor's pardon if I was guilty of any disrespect to any friend of your honor."

"All right, Casse Tete. To whom?"

"To that old—lady—"

"You can say old cat, if you like. I want to hear plain talk now, Casse Tete. I have been kept in the dark too long, too long."

And the young man glared round at the inoffensive horses munching their oats, as if every one were a Potsdam.

"That's what I said, your honor, to myself. It is time my colonel heard the truth from some one, or he'll be going headlong to the devil in the next charge, and never know what he is missing at home."

"Missing at home?"

"Yes, my colonel, missing at home, with madame crying her lovely dark eyes out, and that old cat to pour poison into her ears all the time, trying to make her think you are a brute, and not a gentleman of the old blood, and all that sort of stuff. Confound that old blood, say I. What has all the old blood done for us?"

Gabriel put up his hand.

"Don't abuse old blood, Casse Tete. My family were noble, before the Revolution."

Casse Tete stamped his foot.

"Hurrah! so much the better. Then I've got the old cat on every point. I'm glad I told her so. I thought I was lying; but I had made up my mind to stick to it, as I did in Berlin. I made that Prussian own up that there never was any battle of Rossbach, and I made the old cat admit you were noble enough for any one."

"And now, Casse Tete," said Gabriel, who was rapidly becoming irritated at the devious conversation of his eccentric orderly, "if you'll tell me what you're talking about I shall be obliged."

"Certainly, my colonel. It all took place at the ferry of Mayence."

"What took place?"

"The fight, my colonel, between me and the old cat, about madame."

"Ah, I begin to see. You mean—"

"I mean that your honor told me to take the ladies to the French frontier."

"And you did so?"

"A Death's Head Cuirassier obeys his orders at all risks, colonel. I did."

"Did anything happen on the way?"

"Nothing, my colonel, but what always does happen when women are around."

"What do you mean."

"Clack, my colonel, gabble, gabble, as if her tongue would never stop."

"Whom are you talking of?"

"The old cat, your honor. She thought I didn't hear her; but I took care to keep my old Russian's nose right between the hind wheels,

and heard her, all the way, trying to persuade madame to say she'd leave you, and ask the emperor to break the marriage."

Gabriel was breathless.

"Well, and did she—?"

He could say no more.

"Did she weaken, my colonel? Ah, that was just what I was afraid of, as I thought of that poor forlorn little thing that your honor married in the village church by Olmutz and how she'd been away from you a whole year, with every one trying to lead her astray. I tell you I trembled all over. But, my colonel, this I have to say now, before I tell you anything more. If ever there was an angel with black eyes—they paint them blue in the pictures, but then painters don't know any more than other folks about angels—if ever there was an angel in this world, it is madame."

Gabriel sighed deeply.

"You say it. Thank you, Casse Tete."

"Don't thank me, my colonel. Thank the good God that gave you such a wife as you have in madame. I tell you it made me think of the days before the guillotine and their Goddess of Reason, when men were not ashamed to go to church and say their prayers. Do you know, my colonel, what was all she would answer to the old cat beyond a few sobs?"

"What, Casse Tete?"

Gabriel's voice was very low now.

The old cuirassier paused. His lean dark face wore an air of solemnity, new to it. He took off his helmet and Gabriel was amazed to see him make the sign of the cross on his breast-plate as devoutly as a child.

"She only answered, my colonel," he said in a mere whisper, "she only answered: 'Whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder.'"

Gabriel covered his face with his hands.

The revulsion of feeling taught him how petty was his own suspicion beside the simple trust and faith of a woman.

"And I've been thinking, ever since, my colonel," said Casse Tete slowly, "that a woman who holds to that doctrine, in the teeth of the Emperor of the French and a host of high folks, is not the woman to bring disgrace on my colonel."

Gabriel bowed his head.

"But she was with the Prince of Potsdam, and in his power," he muttered at last.

He felt as if he must confide in some one, and Casse Tete was his only friend, if a humble one.

"What was she doing in the Prussian lines with that man?" he repeated; "and what did Delaroche mean by saying—?"

"Please, your honor," replied Casse Tete in his gruffest way, "there's more mischief comes of those popinjay staff officers than enough. I don't know and I don't care what Captain Delaroche or any other man tells about madame, I'll stake my life that she's as true as the needle to the pole, and that the old cat is at the bottom of all the lies, somewhere. As for being in the Prussian lines that may have been a mistake or not. I don't know, but this I do know. I'll swear madame is an angel without wings, and if any man but your honor says the contrary, I'll ram the lie down his throat. Thousand thunders!"

And Casse Tete turned purple at the idea.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JENA.

"BUT you said you had a quarrel with the marquise," pursued Gabriel, when his faithful orderly had recovered his coolness.

"Yes, your honor, that was at the ferry of Mayence. You see, I'd been listening to all her talk on the way, and I was as angry as a whole nest of hornets by the time we reached the ferry, while my horse, trotting after those fresh beasts at every stage, was pretty tired. And then when we got to the ferry, the old cat tried to persuade madame to send back the carriage and stay on German soil. I knew what that meant."

"What do you think it meant?"

"That they were going to give me the slip, and I was determined to see them inside our lines at Mayence. I knew that they could not get back out of the territory of France without a fresh passport, and to get that they would have to go to Paris."

"How came you to know about their passports?"

"Eh, parbleu, my colonel, I had to show them at our own posts on the road. There was a passport signed by Prince Talleyrand himself, giving to the Marquise de St. Jean and Madame Lenoir the liberty to enter the lines of the French army, to enable madame to join her husband."

"Are you sure, Casse Tete?" asked Gabriel, beginning to tremble, "that the passport called her Madame Lenoir?"

"Certainly, my colonel."

"Then my marriage is recognized as being valid, and I have—"

He did not say what he meant, that he had thrown away his chance of happiness by his jealous anger; but he thought it.

"Yes, my colonel," continued Casse Tete, without noticing his commander's agitation,

"that was what it said; for I read it with my own eyes, and I can read, my colonel."

Casse Tete said this with pardonable pride, for it was not every man in the French army who could read.

"But I knew that as soon as they got back into France, the *visas* (signatures) would have show they had been in our lines, and that they would require a fresh permit to make a fresh journey, so I was bound they should cross the ferry. I saw that madame was crying, and didn't know what to do. I knew the reason too, colonel; she didn't want to be cut off entirely from you, and the old cat was pressing her with all sorts of arguments. So at last I spoke out myself."

"And what did you say?"

"*Parbleu*, my colonel, I told the old cat that I thought she might be in a better business than exciting mutiny in His Majesty's Guard; that madame belonged to the Death's Heads now, and that the colonel had given his orders that she should stay in Paris till the war was over."

Gabriel could not help a smile.

"You put it in that light?"

"Yes, my colonel, just in the way of good order and military discipline. I saw that something had to be done and the reputation of the regiment was at stake."

"And what said the marquise?"

"She called me a brute and a rude fellow, asked how I dared to speak so to a lady of her rank, and told me to go back to my regiment. They needed my escort no longer."

"And what said you?"

"I told her that I had my orders, and I was going to obey them, if I had to pick up the two of them and carry them aboard the ferry-boat. I didn't covet the office, I can assure you, my colonel, but I said it, and it had its effect. The old cat quieted down, and my words seemed to comfort madame, for she spoke right out."

"And what did she say?" asked Gabriel, in a tone of suppressed eagerness.

"She said to me: 'Thank you, brave man, for reminding me of my duty. Tell my husband, when you return, that he will find his wife in Paris, whenever his duties permit him to seek her,' and with that, my colonel, she held up her pretty little head and called out to the postillion to go on board the ferry; and aboard they went. The old cat had no more to say then."

"And then you came away?"

"Not I, my colonel. I staid till I saw the boat coming back, and the ferryman told me that they had taken horses for Paris directly they got to the other side."

Gabriel uttered a sigh of relief.

"Thank you, Casse Tete."

"No thanks are needed, my colonel. If you have finished supper I will make up your bed!"

"Not to-night, Casse Tete. If I am not mistaken, we shall get orders to saddle up and be on the watch, all night."

"So much the better, my colonel. You'll ride the Russian to-morrow, of course. He'll carry you all day and all night. Ah, if we only meet that accursed prince to-morrow!"

"Yes, if we only do."

"How we will trounce them, my colonel! I've a long score to pay those fellows about their Rossbach and all the rest."

And then Casse Tete went to look after his horses, while Gabriel, wrapped in his cloak, sat leaning against a tree and thinking to himself that he might yet be happy, if he survived the next day's fight.

Only one thing remained to be explained, and that was, how Inez came to be inside the Prussian lines and under the escort of the Prince of Potsdam. The Marquise de St. Jean was at the bottom of the plot, he felt sure, but in what manner he could not yet see, for the life of him.

So, alternately ruminating over the future and dozing over the fire, passed the chilly hours of that 13th of October night, and just as the first streaks of dawn showed in the east, came the bugle calls and drums, closely followed by the roar of artillery all round them.

The Battle of Jena had begun and there was no mistaking the temper in which it was opened. The French had before them the far-famed Prussian infantry, the steadiest in Europe; and on the issue hung the fate of Prussia and a whole continent besides.

The Death's Heads were up and on the alert at the first gun, cleaning their horses and cooking breakfast, with the coolness of veterans who knew that a hard day's work is before them; but they were allowed to remain in quiet all the morning behind the shelter of the Landgrafenberghighs, while the cannon thundered on the further side, and the rolling of volleys never ceased.

Gabriel, for the first time during a battle, was in a fever of excitement at the inaction to which he was compelled. He could not leave his regiment, and he could see nothing of the battle. He had to pace up and down by the banks of the little stream, listening to the cannonade and thinking to himself all the time:

"They will kill him before I get a chance to strike a blow."

The fate of a campaign had become of secondary importance to him to the personal animosity he felt against a single man in the enemy's army.

At last, in the middle of the afternoon, he saw a commotion on the heights of Landgrafenberghighs, where he knew the emperor to be stationed.

A staff officer was seen descending the hill at full gallop.

The young colonel drew his belt tighter, and said to Casse Tete:

"Orders to charge. Get ready."

Presently came a mighty cheer from the masses of cavalrymen standing waiting by their horses, and the cheer spread from regiment to regiment, till every man was roaring: "*Vive l'Empereur!*"

Then came a clattering and rattling, and Gabriel saw a crowd of glittering officers cantering toward him behind the white heron feather of Murat, which rose from its forest of black ostrich plumes and shone in the rays of the sun like a star.

The Grand Duke of Berg was coming, and the battle was about to be finished by one of those magnificent charges which no other man could lead so fiercely.

The "Beau Sabreur" never looked so well as when he was about to head such a rush. His tall figure and dark, handsome face, with its curls and whiskers; the crimson velvet furred pelisse; the jewels on his dolman, the foppery of his whole costume and trappings no longer looked ridiculous or out of place.

It was the splendor of battle; the very magnificence of force that radiated from that knightly figure as he reined in his bay charger and smiled proudly on the vast concourse of horsemen around him.

Gabriel saw him coming and forgot his own wrongs and anger in the fierce excitement of that magnetic presence. He felt that the time had come to fight.

The glittering marshal cantered up and halted a moment before the Death's Heads, to answer Gabriel's salute. The dark cuirassiers had not uttered a shout, but were standing in the ranks by their horses' heads, looking like bronze statues.

Murat smiled approvingly, and spoke so that half the regiment could hear him:

"Colonel Lenoir," he said, "I was looking for a good regiment to head this charge with myself. Mount your men and follow."

Then he turned to his staff:

"Tell them to mount up at once. The Death's Heads have the van, Lenoir's division the advance, the rest in support. Sound the advance."

A moment later the Black Cuirassiers, grim and silent, their dark shocks of horse-hair shaking behind them as they trotted, were moving out after the great cavalry chief round the base of the Landgrafenberghighs, while behind them swept twelve thousand heavy horsemen, in wave on wave of steel.

Gabriel Lenoir, his sword drawn, rode just behind the marshal's staff, and in that order they entered the field.

As they cleared the skirts of the heights, a bluish white pall of smoke covered everything from sight, and it was impossible to tell what was going on.

The red flashes of muskets and rifles lit up the vail incessantly, but disclosed nothing except dark groups of men, who stood still and seemed to have nothing to do but fire away into the blank smoke.

Above the mist they could see the summit of the Landgrafenberghighs, crowded with black figures, watching them, but that was all. Where they were going, no one seemed to know but Murat.

On cantered the chief, with his staff of glittering officers, till the smoke had swallowed up all the glitter, and they looked like ghosts of horsemen.

On swept the grim Death's Heads and the funereal gloom of their appearance seemed to fit their surroundings. They rode like men who are at home.

Presently they began to hear cheering in front and on either side, and could see the little knots of black figures in the smoke break up, waving hats wildly in the air.

Then they felt that their horses were trampling over something soft, and knew that they were riding on dead bodies.

The infantry had fought till they were exhausted, and the cuirassiers were to decide the issue. The cheering grew louder all round them, and they saw parties of men running rapidly to either side to get out of the way, while the sound of their own rattling accouterments and the tremulous motion of the earth was beginning to drown all other sounds.

And then out of the smoke in front came the spitting lines of fire of the enemy's infantry, the broader flashes of cannon, while a pattering hail of bullets came singing over their heads.

Gabriel saw the white plume of Murat more plainly, and saw, too, that his brilliant staff of officers were scattering right and left, leaving the way clear for the regiments.

"To me, my children. Forward!"

They knew the clarion tones of the "Beau

Sabreur," and answered them with one roar of fierce joy; then they saw the enemy, in ragged black groups of men, firing wildly at them as they rode.

In another moment the dark line of the Death's Head Cuirassiers was sweeping like a billow of steel over the confused infantry, and, with a wail of despair, the Prussians broke and fled.

On swept the dark line, steadily as ever, the men leaning over their chargers' necks, stabbing as they went, or trampling down the fugitives remorselessly, but never breaking their array.

There had been no serious opposition as yet, and Gabriel had not seen his foe.

Then they passed some abandoned batteries, the teams killed or disabled, the dead artillerymen lying under the wheels of the guns, everything the picture of disaster.

The smoke began to grow thinner, and Gabriel looked round him as he rode. Right and left, as far as he could see, the field was covered with a mass of fugitives, running without order and not firing a shot, while waves of the horsemen behind him were galloping and spreading outward to gather up the Prussians.

They had not been needed to decide the battle, these mail-clad horsemen. It was won already, and they had only to gather the fruits.

But, look as he would, he could see no sign of the Prussian cavalry, which should have been there to oppose Murat and save the beaten remnants of the army from annihilation.

It was not there. It had been used up, early in the day, in unavailing charges, and the French reserves found nothing to oppose them.

It was a mere unresisted butchery now, and even the pitiless Death's Heads grew ashamed to kill, and rode on after the white plume of Murat, which went, as straight as an arrow, toward a distant line of wagon tilts, that marked the enemy's baggage train.

It was gained, and then, as they looked round, the cannonade had ceased, and the French soldiers could be seen slowly advancing over the field after the cavalry, while great black crowds of prisoners were being driven to the rear like sheep.

Then Gabriel became aware that the sound of distant guns was growing plainer every moment on the road they had just captured, and he spoke to Murat, who had halted.

"Ay, ay," replied the marshal with a shrug; "that is Davoust and Bernadotte at Auerstadt, pounding them. Colonel, the Prussians have no army left."

CHAPTER XXXII.

HUNTING A PRINCE.

THE marshal's words were true: the poor Prussians had no longer an army. Beaten in fractions, cut to pieces, prevented from rejoining each other, one division after another surrendered in different parts of the unhappy kingdom, and within three weeks from the time the Emperor of the French entered the Thuringian Forest, there was no enemy to oppose him.

But in all these movements, while the victorious French were traversing the length and breadth of Prussia without molestation, Gabriel Lenoir had not met his deadly enemy, the Prince of Potsdam.

The Death's Heads had not been idle, and he had his share of work. He had assisted at the surrender of Prince Hohenlohe and Blucher, and had scanned the lists of the paroled prisoners in vain, to find the prince's name; but no intelligence had rewarded him.

It was not until they had entered winter-quarters, when the Guard Cavalry were cantoned at Warsaw, and the foe to be met had changed from Prussia to Russia, that he at last heard of him.

The young colonel had been inspecting his regiment that morning, and was riding slowly back to his quarters in the city, when he met Delaroche, who greeted him and asked him if he had heard the news.

"What news? No, I have heard nothing. Are we to return to Paris? There's no one here left to fight."

Delaroche laughed.

"Isn't there? I'm afraid we shall find out when it is too late, my friend, that there is some one left to fight."

"Oh, you mean next summer. Yes, but we can't fight now. Why, the whole country is covered with snow. You forget it is January, Delaroche."

"January or July, it makes no difference. The Russians are advancing to drive us out of our cantonments, if they can."

"But surely they must be mad. Who ever heard of fighting in winter?"

"These Russians are not like the rest of the world. They have winter nine months in the year, and yet they manage to do some good fighting. I tell you they are coming, and we shall get marching orders before to-morrow night. By the by, you remember that Prussian fellow I told you about that cut such a dash in Paris last year?"

"The Prince of Potsdam? Yes," said Gabriel eagerly. "What of him?"

"He's with them."

"How do you know?"

"Well, you see, a deserter came in, only this morning, from their lines. He was an officer, by the by, and brought with him a morning report of their army. I saw it. Among the rest I saw that there is a corps of Prussians, thirteen thousand strong, under one of our emigrant officers, L'Estocq—more shame to him—and one of the brigades is commanded by my friend."

"The prince?"

"Yes. Why, what's the matter, Lenoir? You look as if I'd brought good news."

"Good news! You have indeed, Delaroche. Ah, that villain! I shall catch him at last, and drag the truth out of him."

"What truth? What do you mean?" asked the young officer, bewildered.

"Do you remember what Madame St. Jean told you once, Delaroche, about the French officer who married Mademoiselle de Real, and has had to keep his marriage a secret ever since?"

"Yes. You don't mean—?"

"I am the man. That lady is my wife, and the emperor has acknowledged the marriage to be valid."

Delaroche looked at him for a moment in surprise, and then said, slowly:

"If that is the case, Lenoir, I know what I should do in your place."

"And what is that?"

"Follow that scoundrel to the ends of the earth, if necessary, to kill him. Do you know what he said to one of our officers under a flag of truce? I was there and heard it, and I would not repeat it, but that it concerns your honor."

"What was it?" asked Gabriel, gnawing his lip. He feared some new slander.

"The officer was General Cassagnac, our chief-of-staff, who came to arrange the details of a surrender with him. The Prussians were to march out, bag and baggage, and we were to have the fortress of Custring. Well, Cassagnac was polite, and assured him of the sympathy of the French with brave men in misfortune. So they got to talking, and it ended in talking of Paris, where they had both met last year."

"Yes, yes. Be quick, Delaroche."

"Well, the name of Mademoiselle de Real came up, and Cassagnac expressed his sorrow that the war had broken off what every one thought was to be a match between her and the prince. Then Potsdam laughed, and told him that he did not care about that, for he had heard that the character of mademoiselle was not that which a Prussian noble had a right to expect in a wife, and that, for his part, he had carried her off to Germany, but had got tired of her, and left her to the care of some poor devil of a husband, who, he understood, was willing to pick up other men's leavings."

Gabriel had become whiter and whiter while this precious revelation was being made; but his eyes blazed as he asked in a low tone:

"Did he mention any name?"

"No, he knew better, I suspect; for it was only a moment before, Cassagnac had been regretting that your regiment had been detached from the cavalry to go with the guard, and had been telling stories of how your fellows cut up that Prussian regiment of cuirassiers the other night."

Gabriel remembered the affair, and how he himself had killed a Prussian officer in the dark, mistaking him for his enemy whom the dead man strongly resembled in face and figure.

"Yes," continued Delaroche, smiling at the recollection, "I remember Cassagnac told him how the helmet was found cut in two, and the poor fellow never spoke again. But we didn't know that you were Potsdam's enemy."

"Then keep it secret now, Delaroche. I want to catch him at last, and he will keep out of my way if he knows that I have heard his stories."

Then Gabriel went to his quarters, and paced the floor like a caged lion, thinking over his revenge.

When the summons came to move out of the comfortable cantonments into the cheerless regions of a Polish winter, and the rest of the army grumbled and turned out slowly, swearing at the luck, the Death's Head Cuirassiers were one of the few bodies of men that presented a thoroughly serviceable appearance. Their young colonel was eager for work, eager for hardship, for any amount of privation and misery so long as it brought him face to face with his deadly foe.

The dreary winter campaign dragged its slow length along, and the Death's Head Cuirassiers had their share of the work. On the 8th of February, 1807, in a driving snow-storm, was fought the battle of Eylau, where the regiment was taken by surprise, by a cloud of Cossacks, who emerged from the mist at full speed while the Death's Heads were at a halt, and had killed half the regiment before they were finally repulsed in confusion.

It was then, at the moment when Gabriel Lenoir's horse was shot under him by a Russian bullet, that he saw, or thought he saw, his enemy, in the midst of the Red Cossacks of the Russian Guard.

It was only a glimpse, and he could not get

at him, but the fact remained that the Prince of Potsdam had become a good soldier, and that the Death's Heads had suffered their first check and loss.

Casse Tete was more excited over it than his colonel and, although the Russians fell back after the battle, the obstinate orderly insisted to his master that the honor of the French arms was stained. It was the first time that the emperor had not driven his foes in headlong rout and confusion from the field.

"It's all very well to call it a victory, my colonel," he said as he brought up Gabriel's solitary remaining horse next morning to their cheerless bivouac in the snow; "but the Russians have an army still and your honor has only one horse left. Its lucky it was only the Austrian horse that was killed. The Orloff trotter is left alive still and he'll have to carry you all next summer."

And so it turned out.

The French army returned to its quarters for the rest of the winter, and again Gabriel Lenoir had to chafe in forced inactivity through three weary months of snow, rain and mud, till the Polish summer came on them again with a rush in June, and the French army found itself opposed, on a fair field, to the Russians at Friedland.

And there at last Gabriel Lenoir met his ancient enemy, face to face.

It was early in the day, when less than thirty thousand French were holding their own with difficulty against more than twice as many Russians, that the heavy cavalry under Nansouty arrived to the help of their imperiled comrades, and the Death's Head Cuirassiers were ordered to charge a mass of Cossacks that looked as if they could swallow them up.

Gabriel knew that the charge was a desperate one, and only made in the hope of gaining time for the rest of the French forces to arrive, when victory was thought to be certain.

The cuirassiers were to be sacrificed to save the army.

The young colonel looked round on his diminished band. The once numerous and lordly regiment had dwindled to a bare four hundred men, but they were all grim, war-worn veterans.

He drew his sword and pointed to the dark masses of the Russians.

"It is time for us to die, Death's Heads," he called out, in his clear, cutting tones. "Who will follow Lenoir to death?"

There was no answer; but he heard the rattling of accouterments as the Black Gascons drew their belts tighter, looked to their pistols, and settled themselves into their saddles. He understood them.

"Forward then," he said. "France asks us to kill as many Russians as we can before they kill us."

Then away went the grim black line, through the smoke and dust, over the bodies of dead wounded men, like the rapid sweep of a thunder-cloud and burst into the midst of the astonished Russians, with a vindictive ferocity that no other regiment in the service showed. The Cossacks had not dreamed they would dare charge with such a handful of men; but the fierce energy with which they came, on their big black chargers, scattered the ponies of the steppe like chaff before the wind.

The stalwart Gascons rode over them and trampled them down, smiting all the time with their long swords, stabbing, shooting, killing, till they had burst clear through the whole host of Russians, leaving a broad lane of death behind them.

Then they turned to cut their way back, and Gabriel saw his enemy at last.

The Prince of Potsdam, in the uniform of a Russian general of cavalry, was pointing to the Death's Heads and trying to induce a body of Cossacks to charge.

When Gabriel saw him he was not three hundred yards off.

"Follow me, Death's Heads!" shouted the young colonel. "This way!"

He pointed to the enemy and dashed off alone like a maniac, going straight for his foe's back.

With a wild cheer the cuirassiers rushed after him, in a mass of horses and men, no longer at the trot but full gallop.

Potsdam heard his foe's come, turned to face him, calling to the Cossacks to charge, and actually galloped a few paces to meet the Death's Heads.

Then his heart failed him, as he saw the terrible black horsemen coming, and he wheeled to fly.

That sight settled the Cossacks. Unwilling to charge before, they turned tail as soon as they saw their leader give way, and in another moment the Death's Heads were in their rear, stabbing like fiends, and growling their rage as they stabbed, with Gabriel Lenoir many yards in the van, cutting right and left to clear a way and get at his foe.

For the Prince of Potsdam had a fine horse, blooded and fleet of foot, and he was burying himself among his men and pushing to the front of the rout, in a way that showed him to be desperately afraid.

At last Gabriel found himself about choked with dust, his horse blown, the Cossacks rapidly distancing his heavy cuirassiers, while a battery of guns was beginning to play on his scattered men, and it was obviously necessary to retreat.

But the great mass of Cossacks which had been threatening the exhausted infantry of Lannes and Mortier was scattered all over the plain of Friedland, and the young colonel could hardly believe his eyes when he saw what his desperate men had done.

They were trotting slowly back now, over the ghastly field, while the rest of the French heavy cavalry were coming up to support them, and General Nansouty, as he met Lenoir, said to him:

"Colonel, the Death's Head cuirassiers have saved France. The emperor has just arrived with the Guard, and saw that charge. It was terrible. Well may they call you the Cuirassiers of Death. Go to the rear and halt. Your work is over."

At another time these words from his commander would have elated our hero beyond measure; but now he was only thinking of one thing: his enemy had escaped him again.

He saw, amid the smoke of the French lines, on a little eminence, the well known dark group, with the white horse in the center, that all the old soldiers knew was the emperor and his staff, and, as he rode forward toward it, he called out to his captains:

"Get your squadrons in order, gentlemen. Get them in order. If we are only a corporal's guard, let us not disgrace the name of the regiment before his majesty."

And he was answered by a feeble cheer from the throats of less than a hundred and fifty men, some with bloody faces, others reeling to and fro on their horses, but all as proud as ever of their name.

The captains—there were but three left unwounded—gathered their men into their old places, closing up the gaps and presenting a solid front, and it was in line of battle, at a slow trot, steady as so many bronze statues, that the Death's Head Cuirassiers swept up to the foot of the emperor's hill, just as the bear-skin shakos of the Old Guard moved steadily out on the field, and a hundred French guns, in a single grand battery, galloped into action and opened like thunder on the amazed Russians.

The handful of French had changed to an army. They had seized the bridges of Friedland, and the Russians were slowly being enveloped by the French, under the eye of the emperor himself. And in the midst of the eager streams of blue uniforms, hurrying to the field, the Death's Head Cuirassiers formed their line, dismounted and rested by their horses, while the adjutant commenced the mechanical calling of the rolls of killed, wounded and missing.

As for the emperor on the hill, he never cast his eyes that way. The battle was not over yet.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

COUNT LENOIR.

BUT before the sun had set, the contest was terminated. As Casse Tete said:

"In the old style, my colonel, the old style of Marengo and Austerlitz and Jena. All the infantry knocked to pieces, eighty guns taken, twenty thousand prisoners, and all the trains in our hands. The little corporal has awakened up again. I thought he would not rest till he'd taught these Russians they were no better than the rest of Europe. The idea of their comparing their lousy, greasy Cossacks to our men. Now they will mind their own business."

Casse Tete, unmindful of the fact that the Russian cannon-balls knocked the dirt about within a few feet, had lighted a little fire and was tranquilly cooking a pot of soup for his master, when they witnessed the final rout of the enemy.

"And now, my colonel, the soup is ready," he said a moment later. "I thought that we would have it timed to the very moment the Russians began to run. It is good, my colonel, and as hot as the place where all Russians ought to go."

Gabriel watched from his commanding position the dark streams of fugitives that were choking up the only bridge the Russians had left now, and was mechanically sipping his soup, when he was startled by a voice behind him.

"Good-evening, colonel. Is your soup too scarce to let me have a basin of it? for on my word, I am hungry since my breakfast at daylight."

Gabriel turned round and saw the emperor himself, sitting on his white horse close behind him, with no one near him but the Mameluke, Roustan. Casse Tete, very red in the face, was standing at a salute, looking foolish, and Gabriel could not help being confused himself.

"How is it, thou, old mustache?" said the emperor, smiling at Casse Tete. "Hast thou no soup left for me, when I say I am very hungry?"

"Your majesty can have mine," said Casse Tete bluntly, "if you're not too much used to silver to mind a tin basin. The bread's bad;

but what can one expect out here among these Russian savages?"

The emperor laughed at the cuirassier as he spoke, then leaned over, and said in a tone of affected confidence:

"My friend, I am starving. I had no dinner, thanks to those Russians, and even black bread would taste nicely."

"Certainly, your majesty, certainly," cried Casse Tete, bustling about. "Here is the best I can do now, but if your majesty would wait awhile I can cook you a ragout of lamb. I killed it yesterday—"

"Never mind—ah—what's your name, my old grumbler?" said the emperor, as he took the basin and huge iron spoon and began to eat the soup without any further ceremony.

"My full name, sire, is Private Hercule Forton of the 1st squadron Death's Heads, but they all call me Casse Tete, because I always cut at the head."

The emperor burst out laughing so that he spilled some soup, and cried to Gabriel, who had been standing, hardly knowing what to do or say:

"My faith, colonel, your man has a good name for the regiment at large. I shall have to call them my head-breakers in future. Well, you see, you wouldn't give me any of your soup, so I've had to take up Casse Tete's supper."

"Indeed, sire," answered Gabriel, confused, "I did not think your majesty would take it after my lips had touched it, or—"

"Tut, tut," said the emperor, gayly; "the lips of a brave man are not poison to an old soldier. I suspect I have the best of you, and that Casse Tete kept the good soup for himself—eh, old fox?"

"Oh, your majesty," stammered the old cuirassier, distressed. "You wouldn't think I'd rob my own colonel?"

"Then do you mean you gave me the poor soup?" asked the emperor, with affected severity. "Is that your loyalty?"

Casse Tete flushed deeply. "No, sire," he said, "but my colonel needs his soup all the time; and your majesty has only taken mine for a whim."

"Whim or not," retorted the emperor, "it is good enough for any man, and as I have drank it all up, Casse Tete, you'll have to make some more. By-the-by, did you break any heads to-day?"

"A couple of Russians, your majesty, just for practice, you know; but I pointed five of the scoundrels, and would have done more, but their ponies ran too fast."

The emperor handed him back the empty basin of soup, with a smile:

"Did you ever get the cross, Casse Tete?" The cuirassier's face lighted up.

"No, sire, but if I had it—"

"What, Casse Tete?"

"I think I should be ready to go to heaven, your majesty."

The emperor took the cross from his own breast, and handed it to the soldier:

"Put that on; and if any man asks you by what right you wear it, tell him that I gave it you."

Then he turned to Gabriel, who had been wondering at the unusual familiarity exhibited by the man, whose last words to him had been the cool advice to "get killed."

The expression of that pale, marble-like face changed from playful irony to grave courtesy, and his words were gentle and wonderfully gracious.

"Colonel Lenoir," he said, "do not think, because I have not hitherto spoken to you, that I have not watched you to-day. I came up to the field as you began your advance, and, had you been driven back, Lannes must have been cut to pieces, and I could only have saved the wreck, not won the battle. You have saved the army to-day, monsieur, and the Emperor of the French thanks you for it."

Gabriel stood before the emperor, his head bowed, and, for the first time in two years, began to feel the singular charm which surrounded that great man, alike with Caesar and Hannibal in classic days.

"I only did my duty, sire," he muttered, for he was unable to speak loud.

"That is true; and if all my officers did their duty, I should never have had to say 'Egypt is no longer French.' Colonel, are you much attached to your regiment?"

Gabriel flushed with pride.

"Sire, they would die for me; I for them."

"That is unfortunate, for I am about to part you from each other."

Casse Tete uttered a groan, and then turned crimson at his own temerity and pretended to be coughing over the smoke of the fire. The emperor followed him with a freezing look, and went on:

"I am about to part you from each other. I have directed Berthier to appoint you to the vacancy caused by the death of General Messerac, in the corps of heavy cavalry, and you will assume command of that division at once. I have further instructed the Grand Chancellor, Prince Cambaceres, that you are created Count of Friedland with the estates of the late Duke

of Wildhausen in Saxe-Gotha, which are now confiscated. You will receive your patent by the first post. In the mean time, *count*, (laying emphasis on the title) if you apply to Nansouty, he will, I doubt not, give you a leave of absence. We shall have no more fighting this year, and the Russians will make peace in a few weeks. Good-evening, *general*."

And before the astonished young man could gather his senses to coherent thanks, the emperor had lifted his hat formally, and was cantering slowly away.

Casse Tete was the first to break the silence that ensued.

Suddenly tearing off his helmet, he flung it high in the air, caught it again, and began to yell at the top of his voice, dancing all the time:

"Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur! Vive le general, Comte de Friedland! Hurra! Hurra! Hurra!"

He made such a noise that Gabriel called sharply to him:

"Hush, Casse Tete! Don't be a fool, or I'll not take you with me."

Casse Tete stopped dancing and put on his helmet again, but his face was rippling all over with smiles as he said:

"Your honor wouldn't know what to do without me, monsieur le comte. Oh, my general, how happy I am. If we only had a few barrels of wine we'd have the whole regiment roaring drunk to-night in honor of the Count of Friedland. Isn't it glorious, my general? And a leave of absence, too! We can go back to Paris, and you can see madame, and I can see Babette. Hurrah! I can't help it."

And off went the helmet again, while Casse Tete actually tried to turn a handspring in his joy, coming flat on his back with a clatter that brought him to his senses, and called out a derisive laugh from the whole body of the Death's Heads, who were making their soup fifty yards off.

Casse Tete got up again looking foolish, and without another word set to work making another pot of soup, while his commander thoughtfully finished his own, which had grown cold during the brief visit of the emperor.

He was thinking to himself over the words of his chief that he could have a leave of absence.

That meant that he might go to Paris to visit his wife for the first time since their stolen marriage.

Could he go? A cloud still rested on the fame of Inez, a cloud of suspicion caused by the words of a slanderer; and he felt he could not return to Paris till he had met that slanderer and forced him to eat his words or pay for them with his life.

Brooding over this one disturbance of his now otherwise happy lot, he was roused from his reverie by the approach of all the officers of his regiment in a body.

News flies quickly in camp; they had seen the emperor speaking to their colonel; had heard a rumor of his promotion, and had come all together to express their joy at his good fortune and their grief at parting with him.

Old Major Crocasse, now head of the regiment, but who had been Gabriel's sergeant when he joined the regiment as a recruit, had been telling the rest of the singular words the young man had used when asked why he joined their regiment.

"I remember it as yesterday, my colonel," he said, before them all, "and how I thought you were only boasting. You said you would stay in the Death's Heads till you were our colonel, and you have kept your word. Now you are leaving us, but the rest of what you prophesied has not come true."

"And what was that, major?" asked the young colonel, smiling.

"That when you were colonel I should be a general of division. You have reached that before me."

"Never mind, major. You know that my promotion gives you two steps and the other two are soon taken in these days. We may yet have to give the Austrians one more lesson, and you will have your chance then."

Gabriel was right. France was not yet quite at the head of Europe, and it was two years later, at Wagram, that Colonel Crocasse, of the Death's Heads, gained his general's epaulettes at the head of a regiment which had not a single man with blue eyes or light hair in its ranks. Gabriel Lenoir had been the first and last who had staid in the corps, and he had earned his place by hard work.

The congratulations of the officers were broken by the arrival of an orderly hussar bearing a big official envelope. It was directed to "Le General, Comte de Friedland," and contained Gabriel's commission as general.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CONCLUSION.

A WEEK after the battle of Friedland, the Russians proposed a truce; two weeks later, on the 7th of July, 1807, the Emperors of Russia

and the French met on the raft of Tilsit, and signed the famous treaty of peace.

The new Count of Friedland had been ordered, as a special mark of favor, to command the guard of honor for the two emperors on this occasion, and by his request, the guard was composed of his old regiment, the Death's Head Cuirassiers.

It was a proud moment for Gabriel when the two emperors, riding side by side, passed in front of the motionless lines of black horsemen and he heard Alexander say to the first man in France:

"Sire, my brother, these are terrible men. They look as if they were made of iron. What is the name of this regiment?"

When he was told, he cried out:

"Eh, *mon Dieu*! so these are the fellows that cut up my Cossacks so badly the other day. Why, there are not two hundred of them all told. It is a thing amazing."

Then Napoleon said, smiling:

"Sire, my brother, it was all owing to a spite they had against their colonel. You see, they are all dark men, and he was the only blonde that every remained in the corps more than a week. They tried to kill him, and I had to help them, for I knew they hated him. But it was no use. Every time he ought to have been killed, he only came back victorious; so that finally, to please these grumblers, I had to make him a general, or he would have had the regiment reduced to a corporal's guard in trying to get himself killed."

"And where is this blonde colonel?" asked the czar, amused at the story.

"Permit me to present to your majesty General, the Count of Friedland."

And Gabriel found himself bowing to the czar with the consciousness that all eyes were fixed on him.

"Monsieur le comte," said Alexander, "I am glad to see a lucky man like you; but I must say you treated my poor Cossacks very rudely the other day. Do you know that you made a general run away in that little affair?"

"Yes, sire, I fancied I saw a general officer, but he was a Prussian."

"True. You'll see him presently! He is in my suit."

And the two emperors passed on, followed by a brilliant staff, while the escort was dismounted and told to rest.

Then Gabriel rode away after the staff, found Delaroche, and whispered:

"He is here. Will you act for me?"

"Certainly," was the eager reply. "Where is he now?"

"Out yonder in the czar's suit."

An hour later Delaroche came back and told him:

"It's all arranged. There's a nice moon, and I've found a place outside the pickets. My friend Chabannes has the command out there, and he'll let us through. You're to fight with the small sword. He's afraid of the saber."

"So much the better, Delaroche. It wants three hours to sunset."

He passed the three hours in pacing up and down, cursing the clock for being so slow, and at sunset rode out with Delaroche just as the full moon rose in the east. It was hot and dusty, with a red sky in the west.

They found the prince, with a Russian officer, in the forest, outside the French lines, and Delaroche said:

"Monsieur le Comte de Friedland wishes to be clearly understood before this affair begins. He accused the prince of spreading false reports against madame la comtesse. If the prince retracts these reports, he does not wish to kill him."

The Russian officer looked at his principal, saying:

"That's only fair, Potsdam."

"I have nothing to retract," was the sullen answer. "He has had good luck; I bad. Let him do his best."

He was rather flushed in the face and thick in the voice. Gabriel saw he had been drinking to keep up his courage.

Without another word, the principals were stripped of their garments to the waist, the seconds handed them the little slender rapiers and Gabriel faced his foe at last, sword in hand.

The prince sprung back out of measure instantly and waited for his foe to come on, with a ghastly smile on his face.

He was meditating some trick, and the young general felt puzzled as to what it might be. He knew the prince had been taking lessons for several months in Paris and was turning over in his mind all the movements in fencing he knew. For himself, he had never used the foils much, but he had the advantage of being a practical fighter.

Presently Potsdam said in a sneering sort of way:

"So he's afraid at last. Why don't you attack, monsieur?"

Gabriel made no answer but a straight lunge with all the strength and rage that was in him, and with a harsh, grating laugh the Prussian evaded it and seized his wrist with his own left hand, crying as he shortened his sword:

"At last I have you!"

In the same instant, ere the other could stab, the stalwart cuirassier closed in, catching the point of Potsdam's weapon, careless that it cut his fingers, ran it under his own arm and pinned it fast; then wrenched away his right hand by main strength, and in another moment had his foe on the ground on his back.

Then, with his own knee on the Prussian's chest, his sword at his enemy's throat, he hissed out:

"Retract, or die!"

The seconds looked coldly on, for it was understood it was a duel to the death. All of Potsdam's spurious courage founded on his supposed invincible trick and a liberal quantum of brandy, vanished and he gasped out:

"I retract."

Gabriel removed his knee, placed his foot on the Prussian's sword, and then rose, still keeping his sword's point at the other's throat.

"How did you decoy my wife into your lines before Jena?" he asked sternly. "I know the truth already. Confess it before these gentlemen and take your life."

Potsdam looked up pale and haggard.

"I bribed the marquise to pretend to lose the way and I kept them prisoners. Madame was not to blame. I own that she hates me. Is that enough?"

"No. Confess before these gentlemen that you are a liar and a coward and that you deserve to die."

"I'll confess anything," said the prince, "if you'll take that sword away."

Gabriel removed it with a contemptuous smile, observing:

"Now say on. You are watched. Your life belongs to me."

"I confess that I have slandered the Countess of Friedland; that she is a noble, brave and pure lady, that I have done wrong and ask pardon. Is that enough?"

"It is," said Gabriel, coldly, and he turned his back and walked away.

He was startled by a shout of horror from his seconds, and instinctively sprang to one side and turned.

Not an instant too soon: the treacherous Potsdam, maddened by his disgrace, had snatched up his sword and stabbed at Gabriel's back when every one was off his guard.

Only the quick leap and turn saved the young general. The sword grazed his skin and caught in his shirt, but Gabriel, in another moment, had caught his foe by the throat, flung him on the ground, and with his bare fists pounded the other till he fairly roared for mercy. The pain and the beating did more to cow him than a sword-thrust.

Still the seconds did not interfere, and Gabriel was so angry that he nearly choked the Prussian to death.

Not till he was black in the face did the young man leave him, and then he rose and flung the sword far away from him, saying:

"It is a shame to use a sword on such. The stick is the proper weapon to punish him."

He dressed and rode back to camp.

That evening he received orders from Berthier, chief of staff, to go to Paris with dispatches, announcing to the empress the peace of Tilsit.

"Why do you tremble so, *ma belle*? One would think it was winter, and that you were cold."

It was said in a whisper and the speaker was the Empress Josephine, who sat in state in the throne room of the Tuileries, surrounded by her ladies and the high dignitaries of the empire, awaiting the arrival of the officer who was bringing the news of peace and triumph.

Close to her side was a young lady whose white satin robes made the paleness of her face more conspicuous, though for all its pallor it was the loveliest face in that court of beautiful women.

"I cannot help it, your majesty," was the low answer. "We parted in anger. He may be angry yet."

"Tut, tut," said the empress lightly. "If the gentleman does not know when he has a treasure I will tell him he does not deserve it. Hark! there go the guns. Be firm, Inez, *ma belle*. It is not well to let a man see that you love him too much. I have found that in my time."

And her sunny face was clouded for a moment, for already the ominous rumors had come to the ears of Josephine of the event that was to sadden the rest of her life, two years later.

But now, in the heyday of prosperity, with France at the head of Europe, the guns booming their loud salute in the parks, the bells pealing joyously, the clash of scabbards and spurs, told of nothing but joy, and the empress rose proudly to her feet and stood to welcome in the "boy general," Gabriel Count of Friedland, who entered the saloon at that moment, knelt before his fair sovereign and handed her the letter which contained the joyful news.

"I have the honor to announce to your majesty, that the emperor has beaten all his

enemies, that France is once more at peace, and that his majesty will be in Paris in a week," was his formal announcement.

The empress smiled on him graciously, and turned to Inez.

"Give me the patent, *ma belle*."

Inez, paler than ever, handed to the empress a large parchment.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the empress, "I have the pleasure to present to you his majesty's special envoy, General, the Count of Friedland. Here, *mon cher comte*, is your patent of nobility, with the title to the lands of Wildhausen. May you and your charming wife live long to enjoy them. The company is dismissed."

There was a buzz and a dispersal into informal groups, and the empress descended from the throne, leaning on the arm of Inez, and said to Gabriel:

"And have you not yet had time to speak to your wife? Ah, monsieur, she deserves a scolding; but not from you. Do you know that, last year she actually deserted me to try and find you in the midst of the campaign? It is true. She gave me no peace till I made Talleyrand give her passports, and after all, you were so cruel as to send her back. Ah, monsieur, when I was first married, my husband teased me to come to the front, and it was only because the danger was so great that I had at last to return. It was in Italy, ten years ago. Ah, perhaps we were happier then, when I was simple Madame Bonaparte, than now when I am empress."

And again the empress sighed, but went on chatting in her usual cheering way, not giving the reunited lovers a chance to speak a word.

But they had used their eyes for all that, and those eyes spoke volumes.

When the levee broke up an hour later, the young Count of Friedland found himself at last alone with his wife, and his first words were:

"Inez, I ask forgiveness. I was a jealous brute, a year ago, but I have found my mistake. The man that poisoned our happiness is dead. Can you forgive me the past?"

Her eyes filled with tears.

"I have nothing to forgive, monsieur," she said, in a low voice. "You are here now and it is all forgotten."

"And is it possible—?" he asked, then hesitated and stopped.

"Is what possible, monsieur?"

She was smiling now.

"That you can find anything in me not absolutely to love—of course that is impossible—but just to tolerate? I know I am a rough soldier, Inez. I was a common sentry when you first saw me only a simple soldier."

"I know it," she said, slyly, "and oh, monsieur, how afraid I was of you with your big sword and cuirass. I thought you might take a fancy to eat me up. You looked as if you wanted to do it."

"Did I, Inez?"

They were strolling down the corridor of the Tuileries as he said it and he stopped suddenly.

"It was a fact, I did. Do you know what I was saying to myself when my eyes looked so hungry?"

She looked down at the pavement, very red in the face and murmured:

"How should I know, monsieur?"

"I was saying to myself: There is the woman who shall one day be my wife, when I am a general and a count."

She looked up with an arch smile.

"And you were impudent enough to marry me before you were either. But it is a strange thing—"

And she gave a little low laugh.

"What is a strange thing, Inez?"

"What I was thinking while you were wanting to eat me up."

They heard the clanking of spurs and a scabbard on the stone floor at the end of the corridor and Gabriel asked hurriedly:

"What was it? Tell me before that fellow comes. Quick, what was it?"

"I was thinking, monsieur," and she spoke with provoking slowness, "that if you were only a general and a count, and I were your a countess I should be—"

"What, Inez?"

"The happiest woman in France," she whispered, and then came a clash of armor as Gabriel, unable to control himself, hugged his pretty wife closely and forgot everything else.

He was roused from his vision of bliss by the respectful cough of Casse Tete, and there was his grim orderly like a bronze statue of discretion, standing at a salute, staring at the wall.

"The carriage of Monsieur le Comte de Friedland is waiting," quoth Casse Tete.

THE END.

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